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U.S. SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON VETERAN BUSINESS AFFAIRS

PUBLIC MEETING

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2015

9:00 A.M.

Recorded by: Jen Metcalf, CER

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1 P R O C E E D I N G S

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3 (Meeting called to order, 9:12 a.m.)

4 MR. PHIPPS: So, my name is Michael Phipps. I'm
5 the chairman of the committee, and we're going to get
6 this meeting, on December 9th, called to order.

7 Before opening remarks, we're going to do a roll
8 call of committee members, starting with Kathy.

9 MS. ROTH-DOUQUET: Kathy Roth-Douquet.

10 THE REPORTER: Please hit your microphones.

11 MR. PHIPPS: We'll start again. Just a quick
12 update, the mic button with the little guy with the
13 lines coming out of his mouth, you're going to have to
14 turn that on, and then when you're not speaking, you're
15 going to have to turn it off, because the microphones
16 can only be -- a certain number only can be on.

17 And if you're in the audience and you have a
18 question, please wait until you get a hand-held
19 microphone, and if you could please state your name and
20 organization for the record. Thank you.

21 MS. ROTH-DOUQUET: Kathy Roth-Douquet, Blue Star
22 Families.

23 MR. GARCIA: John Garcia, National Association
24 of State Directors of Veterans Affairs.

25 MR. O'FARRELL: Jim O'Farrell, AMSG.

1 MR. FIELDER: Ed Fielder, Fielder's Choice
2 Consulting.

3 MR. MCADAMS: Rich McAdams, ReliaONE, Inc.

4 MR. ZACCHEA: Mike Zucchea, UConn.

5 MR. WEBB: Larry Webb with the SBA Office of
6 General Counsel.

7 MS. CARSON: Barbara Carson, Associate
8 Administrator, Office of Veterans Business Development
9 at SBA.

10 MR. PHIPPS: Michael Phipps, The Millennium
11 Group.

12 So, I guess now we need to see if we have the
13 phone line open. Do we have a phone line open?

14 UNIDENTIFIED: Um-hum.

15 MR. PHIPPS: So, if we could just get a quick
16 roll call on the phone for the record, if there's
17 anybody online.

18 (No response.)

19 MR. PHIPPS: If there is anybody on the phone,
20 please just state your name and organization.

21 (No response.)

22 MR. PHIPPS: Okay. It doesn't seem we have
23 anybody on the phone.

24 So, as a quick internal housekeeping agenda
25 item, we're going to be covering some other agenda items

1 at the end of the meeting, but we're going -- I'm going
2 to ask somebody to volunteer as a secretary for this
3 meeting. As we discussed last month, we are going to be
4 consolidating meeting notes per meeting, and so if we
5 identify the person who's going to do this month's
6 meeting, you'll be able to take notes, understand that
7 you're going to consolidate the agenda items or the --
8 describe -- it's quite a number of pages, a couple
9 hundred pages, so it's not a quick -- it's not a quick
10 activity. So, knowing that ahead of time will help.

11 If there are any issues or questions, Jenn over
12 here will probably be asking you direct questions. So,
13 is there anybody who wants to volunteer to be the
14 secretary for this meeting? At the -- for housekeeping,
15 we're going to assign additional members for the rest of
16 the year.

17 Thank you, Jim. That was -- you can't -- you
18 already did one? No, actually -- last year?

19 MR. FIELDER: It was a very successful (off
20 mic) --

21 MR. PHIPPS: Ed, can you please turn on your
22 mic?

23 MR. FIELDER: Oh, sorry.

24 We actually did it to complete the report. We
25 did it between September and October, and three or four

1 different people actually went in, and instead of
2 summarizing it as part of the meeting and getting a head
3 start on it, we did it after the fact using the 250
4 pages of transcribed minutes, and it was -- it was very
5 successful in the sense of getting the content of each
6 meeting into the final report, which then led directly
7 to our recommendations in the 95 percent complete report
8 right now.

9 MR. PHIPPS: And we are going to pause for a
10 minute while we dial in.

11 MR. FIELDER: Okay.

12 (Pause in the proceedings.)

13 MR. PHIPPS: Okay, we're dialed in now. Just
14 for the record, is there anybody on the phone?

15 (No response.)

16 MR. PHIPPS: So, Jim O'Farrell has volunteered
17 to be --

18 MR. O'FARRELL: (Off mic.) That was off the
19 record.

20 MS. ROTH-DOUQUET: A question about it. The
21 notes will be transcribed, though, right? You will
22 receive a transcription.

23 MR. PHIPPS: It is going to be in a written
24 format, and it's verbatim --

25 MS. ROTH-DOUQUET: So, you won't literally take

1 notes.

2 MR. PHIPPS: No. You are not actually -- you
3 are not taking --

4 MS. ROTH-DOUQUET: You're just synthesizing
5 notes, yes.

6 MR. PHIPPS: You are just getting the main
7 speakers, formulating it in your head. We are going to
8 have a template for this, so it's not just going to be,
9 you know, unorganized, but, right, you will have an idea
10 in your head that you are going to be the one
11 consolidating the notes, and it will just help with that
12 whole process, and that's part of what Ed had started.

13 So, we'll get started with our first speaker,
14 Larry Webb, from the SBA Office of General Counsel.

15 MR. WEBB: Good morning, everyone. My name is
16 Larry Webb. I'm with the -- as was just noted, the
17 Small Business Administration's Office of General
18 Counsel. One of my functions at the agency is to advise
19 our advisory committees. Of course, this is one of
20 them.

21 Many of you may have had the opportunity to have
22 this briefing before. It is relatively short. That
23 being said, it is important sort of to remind everyone
24 of the sort of standard of conduct for advisory
25 committees, and for our new members, to advise them and

1 answer any questions that they may have.

2 With that being said, everyone should have a
3 copy of what we call the legal dos and don't. Some
4 people think that this is an ethics training. I just
5 want to sort of correct that impression in the sense
6 that none of you are federal employees, and so you don't
7 have an ethical responsibility to the Small Business
8 Administration or the Federal Government; however, as
9 advisory committee members, we do expect that there is a
10 certain standard of conduct, and those are the dos and
11 don't that we have here.

12 They are relatively simple. All of you can
13 read. I'll just sort of touch on the highlights. So,
14 at this point in time, you should sort of already know
15 what the purpose of this advisory committee is, and
16 we've discussed your status as representatives and not
17 as employees of the Federal Government.

18 Simple dos. Please show up, as Mr. O'Farrell
19 just mentioned a few moments ago. If there's a change
20 in status, specifically, if you are representing an
21 organization or a business -- specifically that business
22 in this case -- you would be -- please let us know if
23 there is a change in either your employment or in your
24 representation to that organization so that we can make
25 whatever adjustments we need to make.

1 Obviously, if you are representing an
2 organization and you are no longer a member of that
3 organization, we will have to likely ask you to step
4 aside and let someone who actually represents that
5 organization step forward. So, that's sort of an
6 example of a change of status.

7 One of the really important things to remember
8 is that during the course of your board membership, you
9 may be privy to confidential information, confidential
10 information as it relates to the SBA or other businesses
11 or even other organizations around the table, a part of
12 your ongoing conversations. Please note and remember
13 that that is confidential information and should not be
14 shared beyond these four walls, either in-person four
15 walls or the sort of generic "four walls."

16 The other thing to sort of remember in the -- in
17 the dos section is to the extent that you begin to seek
18 any sort of SBA assistance -- and SBA assistance means
19 an SBA loan, if you are seeking any other sort of SBA
20 assistance, like HUBZones or 8(a) or what have you, all
21 of which are available obviously to the public -- please
22 let us know, because that may change your status.

23 One of the things to remember and to recall is
24 that we -- and myself specifically -- have to look and
25 see if there is a conflict of interest or even an

1 appearance of a conflict of interest. We don't want
2 people -- the public looking and saying, well, that
3 person got that loan or that person got that ability or
4 got that assistance because of their relationship. Even
5 if there's no truth to the matter, we need to look at
6 those things and make sure that there is no conflict or
7 apparent conflict of interest.

8 Some general don'ts -- although we talked about
9 some don'ts already vis-à-vis conflict of interest, et
10 cetera -- and this is a simple one, but we need to
11 remind, you are members of businesses and/or
12 associations that have opinions. That's one of the
13 reasons that you're here. We need to be very careful
14 about conflating those opinions with your board
15 membership.

16 A very -- as an example, a business owner may
17 want to go and discuss a law or a -- some regulation
18 with their local Congressperson, and that's perfectly
19 acceptable. Going to that local Congressman and
20 saying -- or Congressperson and saying, "As a member of
21 this Board, I think blah-blah-blah," would be
22 inappropriate.

23 We want to make sure those lines are kept really
24 clean. This is not in any way, shape, or form a way to
25 stop your First Amendment rights and your business

1 rights or your organizational rights, but we do want to
2 keep those things very clean. No lobbying on behalf of
3 the board.

4 The board is to provide advice and counsel to
5 this agency. That's one of the other things to kind of
6 keep in mind. You're providing advice and counsel to
7 this agency and to the Federal Government, but that goes
8 through a process. You shouldn't be out sort of giving
9 your opinions broadly, publicly. You're supposed to go
10 through this body.

11 You guys vote or talk about how you want to come
12 out on a particular issue, and then that is given to the
13 agency, and we are able to make a decision about how we
14 want to proceed. So, just sort of keep those things in
15 mind.

16 This is pretty simple. Please don't engage in
17 conduct that calls into question your good character.
18 One of the things to recall and to remember is that --
19 and this is difficult to say, but it has to be said --
20 it is not a right to be on the board. It's an
21 invitation, and it's an invitation on behalf of the SBA
22 and the Administrator. So, part of that process is that
23 we have vetted you, we have determined that you meet the
24 standards and meet the eligibility and don't have any
25 conflicts.

1 One of those things also is that you have fine
2 reputations, and you've conducted yourself well, and you
3 have fine résumés, but we have to make sure that that
4 sort of stays in balance; otherwise, the Administrator
5 may have to revoke. I say it. It never -- I don't
6 recall it ever happening, but it's one of the things
7 that we have to say and make very clear.

8 Please don't participate in any or make any use
9 of the information that you receive here -- once again,
10 confidential information -- or information that may be
11 public for your own personal gain. That seems pretty
12 simple, but, once again, to be reminded.

13 The last two are similar, so I'll just sort of
14 speak about them in the same vein. In the similar
15 fashion that we said don't lobby, please don't use your
16 title or status with the committee to endorse products
17 or outside entities. I'm not exactly sure who would
18 want that, but that being said, keep that in mind.

19 Don't attempt to influence government officials,
20 local, state, or federal, or obtain benefits not
21 available to the general public. Once again, these are
22 not the types of things that we have a lot of problems
23 with; however, we try to remind each advisory committee
24 member of this at least annually so that we don't have
25 those type of problems.

1 And the last one, in this similar vein, don't
2 advocate or represent small businesses or other entities
3 applying for small business assistance. It's the same
4 concept. If you have a -- if it appears that you have
5 some type of advantage because of your relationship
6 here, it can give the impression, the perception that
7 things aren't fair and things aren't handled equitably,
8 and we just want to avoid those types of things
9 generally.

10 The last two bullets are easy to talk about,
11 although sometimes we have a lot of questions, and I
12 will wait to see if this group has a lot of questions
13 about it. We do not provide necessarily business cards.
14 Some people have -- I don't know if -- in some other
15 groups, particularly -- they give business cards, and
16 they have -- some people have wanted to put their
17 private business or organization on one side and the SBA
18 on the other. We typically say, like, don't do that,
19 because once again, it gives an appearance.

20 If for some reason -- and some -- some boards
21 have a lot more activity with the public than others,
22 but if for some reason you feel like you need to have a
23 business card or what have you, it should not have,
24 like, the SBA on one side and the -- and the -- your
25 personal and/or organizational information on the other.

1 The last one, the same vein as some of the
2 earlier conversation. The advice and counsel from this
3 board should go through your chairman to the agency.
4 You should not be or please refrain from publicly
5 speaking to the media on behalf of the board, going
6 around -- sort of going around channels.

7 There is a process, and the process is that you
8 guys meet, you discuss the topics, you give that advice,
9 that counsel to the SBA, and then it is acted upon in
10 the way that the agency deems best.

11 You are giving independent advice, though. I
12 mean, we're not supposed to curtail or change your
13 advice in any way, shape, or form. It is your advice,
14 it is your concerns, and that's why you're here, but at
15 the same time, please don't go -- you know, go out
16 advocating to the media in that regard. That would be
17 an inappropriate use of your board presence.

18 I think those are the basic dos and don't. Any
19 questions for me before you get to the probably much
20 more entertaining and interesting aspects of your
21 meeting today?

22 Yes, sir?

23 MR. ZACCHEA: Do you have your contact
24 information?

25 MR. WEBB: I do not have -- I probably have a

1 card in here. I have, like, one card, but I can give
2 the contact information publicly for your meeting
3 minutes. My name is, once again, Larry G. Webb. My
4 number here at the SBA is 202-205-6496, and I can be
5 contacted via email at larry.webb@sba.gov.

6 Once again, thank you so much for your time
7 today, and if you have any questions or concerns, please
8 feel free to contact me. Typically, we either go
9 through the DFO or what have you so that they sort of
10 keep track of those answers and questions, but if you
11 want to get in touch with me independently, that's fine
12 as well.

13 So, thank you so much for your time today.

14 MR. PHIPPS: Thank you, Larry.

15 MR. WEBB: Thank you.

16 MR. PHIPPS: We're going to have a little change
17 in the schedule. We're going to have the new SBA
18 national ombudsman, Earl Gray [sic], come and speak, and
19 Barb Carson will follow in his spot.

20 Would you please state your name for the record.

21 MR. GARCIA: John Garcia. When you did roll
22 call and you stressed the importance of attendance of
23 meetings, shouldn't you also do roll call on those that
24 aren't here, make note of who is not here?

25 MR. PHIPPS: It will be -- we can note it for

1 the record.

2 MR. GARCIA: I mean, do you do a formal roll
3 call?

4 MR. PHIPPS: We do. So, it will be noted in the
5 record who hasn't attended.

6 MR. GARCIA: No, not who hasn't attended; who
7 isn't here today.

8 MR. PHIPPS: Who isn't here today? We will. We
9 usually wait until the end of the meeting to do that,
10 just some people --

11 MS. CARSON: Some people come late.

12 MR. PHIPPS: -- come in fairly late.

13 MR. GARCIA: Okay.

14 MR. PHIPPS: All right. I would like to
15 introduce Earl Gray [sic].

16 MR. GAY: It's Earl Gay.

17 MR. PHIPPS: Oh, Earl Gay.

18 MR. GAY: That's okay, Mike.

19 MR. PHIPPS: Sorry, Earl.

20 MR. GAY: Good morning.

21 BOARD MEMBERS: Good morning.

22 MR. GAY: Wow, you all should be happy to be
23 here. You're doing an important job, and I want to
24 start out by thanking you for what you're doing and the
25 efforts that you are doing.

1 I wanted to talk a little about -- a little bit
2 about who I am and what I do here. I am a Navy vet --
3 any Navy vets in the audience here?

4 UNIDENTIFIED: Three.

5 MR. GAY: Three, all right.

6 What about Army? Yeah, well, we'll see what
7 happens Saturday. There's a big game this week,
8 Army-Navy game.

9 Any Marines or Coast Guard?

10 UNIDENTIFIED: Marines, back --

11 MR. GAY: Marines, that works.

12 Coast Guard? Marines? Ooh Rah.

13 All right. Well --

14 MS. ROTH-DOUQUET: Overrepresented, as usual.

15 MR. GAY: Oh, look at that, overrepresented.

16 Wow.

17 Well, I spent 33 years in the Navy. I went to
18 the Naval Academy a long time ago -- this will take
19 three minutes, and it's a boring bio -- but 33 years in
20 the Navy, and I commanded ships, flew props and
21 helicopters off of small ships and other things.

22 And so I had the opportunity to work on the Hill
23 as the Navy's congressional liaison director, and did
24 inaugurations and the strike commander job out in San
25 Diego, which I sorely miss, and I was also in charge of

1 Navy recruiting.

2 So, afterwards -- I retired a year and a half
3 ago, got asked to come up here and work, and when it
4 involves vets, I'm all in. So, when Barb and Jaime
5 asked me to come down, I said, yeah, absolutely, I'll be
6 there. So, that's who I am.

7 What I do now is I'm in charge of -- I'm the
8 national ombudsman. So I'm, like, what is the national
9 ombudsman? And so I had a chance to look at it and saw
10 what the mission was, and I'm like, yeah, I'm all in on
11 that as well.

12 So, what we do, the Office of the National
13 Ombudsman, it was mandated -- and I have some fact
14 sheets, I'll bring some down and I'll pass them out to
15 you. I'll go up after I get down and bring some of
16 these ONO -- so, if you hear the term "ONO" -- well, you
17 all are military, so we like acronyms -- so ONO is the
18 Office of the National Ombudsman. So, when you hear
19 about that guy from ONO, they're talking about me. So,
20 we have an ONO fact sheet that I'll bring down.

21 So, who are we? The national ombudsman, our
22 purpose is to assist small businesses that run into
23 unfair or excessive fines or regulatory enforcement
24 actions by federal agencies. So, we partner with the
25 federal agencies to ensure that the playing field is

1 level for small businesses.

2 So, does everybody understand that? Was that
3 too -- did I dumb it down too much or was it too heavy?

4 MR. PHIPPS: Perfect.

5 MR. GAY: Okay, cool. I worked at FORCECON,
6 also, so --

7 MR. FIELDER: (Off mic.)

8 MR. GAY: No, you're not. But it's pretty
9 exciting, and what we do -- I have an office of four
10 people, and we work with Larry, and I'll talk about the
11 assistance I had with Larry here in a little bit. I was
12 listening to what you said, and everything you said --
13 stated was true.

14 But what we do is we receive comments from small
15 businesses around the country. We work with our
16 regional partners, so, you know, we have regions around
17 the country, and we have what's called a Regional
18 Regulatory Enforcement Board, and they are -- they
19 consist of regional members across the nation. We have
20 ten regions that are geographically located, and each
21 region has five members of that particular board, and
22 those members are small business owners who comprise the
23 board.

24 It's not political, because I think, in my
25 opinion, this is an apolitical job that we do, because

1 we are helping businesses deal with some of the
2 bureaucracies that some of the federal agencies that we
3 know is inherent. So, it's apolitical, and we have some
4 very active board members, kind of like you all. We
5 have folks that are a part of working groups, and what
6 they do basically is bring up -- since they're located
7 in the regions, they are well aware of the problems that
8 are happening in their regions, and so they bring them
9 up to us, and we handle the problems.

10 I'll give you a case in point. We had a -- we
11 had one person -- is anybody from the Arizona/New Mexico
12 area? Are you familiar, John, with the Mexican wolf --
13 Mexican gray wolf migration? Are you familiar with
14 that?

15 MR. GARCIA: (Off mic.)

16 MR. GAY: So, you know, the Department of
17 Wildlife --

18 MR. PHIPPS: I just want to remind everybody
19 (inaudible).

20 MR. GAY: Of course, roger that. So, they are
21 migrating into Arizona and New Mexico. So, you know,
22 the farm owners are business owners, so it's affecting
23 their livestock. And so we had a 6 1/2-hour hearing
24 held to hear out all the issues that all the business
25 owners had. And so the Department of Interior and the

1 Fish & Wildlife was there, and so they're coming to a
2 resolution.

3 So, we're there to facilitate, and I have to
4 keep saying "facilitate." I wish I had authority, which
5 I'm used to, but I don't. But I take it all the way as
6 far as I can get it legally -- legally -- to make sure
7 that we help the small businesses. And, you know, some
8 of the -- some of the cases have been very interesting
9 and intense, and I've only been here less than two
10 months, but it's a very exciting job.

11 So, we use the Regional Fairness Board and the
12 members to help us root out some of the issues that
13 might be out there. So, they serve as a conduit, but
14 that's not the only way to get in contact with us. You
15 can contact us through email, fax, online, or snail
16 mail, and we'll respond.

17 And in the comments sheets that we get, we
18 basically ask people to fill out -- excuse me, fill out
19 what the situation is and how is it affecting your small
20 business and its growth, and we ask what you want to
21 accomplish, you know, what are you seeking, and we also
22 ask for documentation. And I'll give you all of these
23 things here after I'm done.

24 So, people will send those comment sheets in to
25 my staff. I have some great case management specialists

1 that are -- that have been doing this for over 20 years.
2 They are very good, very good, and I'm proud to say that
3 they are all either former military or spouses of
4 military, everybody in my office. So, I'm just stating
5 that. I'm not inferring, Larry, anything one way or
6 another. I'm just stating a fact. That's all I'm
7 stating.

8 MR. WEBB: (Off mic.)

9 MR. GAY: Okay. I'm just -- I'm very proud of
10 people who serve in that capacity.

11 So, anyway, we get those comment sheets, and
12 then we forward whatever they are seeking to the federal
13 agency, and we expect a high-level, timely response from
14 the federal agencies. So, in the last month and a half
15 since I've been here, since our travel funds have been
16 depleted, I'm here, and so I said, well, listen, I am
17 going to go out and meet these federal agency folks, and
18 so that's what I've been doing.

19 I've been walking all over D.C., meeting IRS,
20 Department of Labor, I mean, a lot of people, and I've
21 got about three or more folks to get done with. I also
22 spent time at the Pentagon, because as you all know or
23 may or may not know -- I know you know, because you all
24 are business leaders -- a lot of the contracts that we
25 have in the federal world emanate from DoD. So, I've

1 met with the folks over there and all the service points
2 of contacts and leaders and stuff for Navy. I'm going
3 to meet with Emily next week at the Navy Yard.

4 So, I've established some personal contacts with
5 them. So, if you have any kind of issues, make sure you
6 send them to us. That's what our job is. And I don't
7 mind getting my feet wet. I'm pretty deep in it now.

8 Now, back to what Larry -- back to Larry, Larry
9 helped us out with vetting. We have to vet those
10 regional members that I talked about, and so what we do
11 is that the Administrator, district directors, regional
12 directors, myself once I can go out and travel, and you
13 all, too, if you have any folks that might want to be a
14 part of the Regional Fairness Board, please let me know.
15 And like I said, again, I'll send you my contact
16 information.

17 So, what our legal office does, Larry and his
18 folks at the Office of General Counsel, is they go out
19 and they vet all the members, and they do a pretty
20 thorough job of that. So, we have to make sure that we
21 don't have any conflicts of interest as we get out
22 there.

23 And he mentioned the case about the business
24 cards. Someone -- that happened to one of our board
25 members. They had an SBA card, but they had their

1 personal information written -- I mean, printed, not --
2 you know how we sometimes just write our personal
3 thing -- I think that's okay, right, but not to have it
4 printed on there is -- you know, that's a different
5 realm.

6 So -- but other than that, we're pretty active
7 up there. So, we stay busy. It's a well -- a very
8 rewarding job, because we know that we're making a
9 difference, and we know that we're being heard. Each
10 year, we have to do an annual report to Congress, and
11 this is the report that we have to submit to Congress
12 each year, and we -- and as a matter of fact, I have to
13 go up in January to testify with the House Small
14 Business Committee.

15 What we do, we basically grade -- you know, I
16 earlier talked about making sure that the federal
17 agencies have a timely and -- response to the issues
18 that we present to them. We usually give them 30 days.
19 So, if they respond between zero and 30 days, then they
20 get an A. We grade them. So, they get graded. You
21 know, if it's after 60 days without an explanation, they
22 get an F. And so it is what it is.

23 We try to work with them. You know, we're not
24 the ruling teacher. We work with everybody. We talk to
25 them. In some instances, let's say IRS, they have a lot

1 of litigation issues -- I know you like that litigation
2 there, Mr. Larry -- and so some of the cases go on and
3 on and on. Just tell us that, but don't blow us off.
4 We get pretty mad if you do that, and we haven't had
5 that case.

6 But anyway, we go up and we liaise with the
7 members of Congress and their staff members out in the
8 different regions that they operate in. So, a pretty
9 good reputation so far. So, that's what we do.

10 So, I know I've talked a lot, so I will stop
11 talking and answer any questions that you might have.

12 MR. ZACCHEA: Yes, sir, Mike Zacchea.

13 MR. GAY: Hey, Mike.

14 MR. ZACCHEA: I'm in Connecticut. The question
15 I have for you is, do you have a listserve or an RSS
16 that you put out, for instance, a monthly or quarterly
17 report about the activities of your office?

18 MR. GAY: No, we don't. Our activities report
19 is reflected in our annual report. What we do have,
20 though, we have quarterly meetings with those Regional
21 Fairness Board members I talked to you about, we have
22 quarterly meetings, and I'm quite sure all of our -- all
23 of our deliberations are public knowledge, right? So,
24 you can get those.

25 And then we also have a national conference here

1 with those regional members each year, here in D.C., and
2 you all are invited to that, too, as well.

3 MR. ZACCHEA: Thank you.

4 MR. GAY: I am going to pass out some of my
5 cards here. Don't give them to the SBA people. They
6 don't deserve them. Here you go, Kathy.

7 MS. ROTH-DOUQUET: Thank you.

8 MR. GAY: Yes, ma'am.

9 MS. ROTH-DOUQUET: I just wanted to clarify.
10 So, your work is limited to small businesses that are
11 trying to work with Federal Government agencies?

12 MR. GAY: Yes, ma'am.

13 MS. ROTH-DOUQUET: Okay. So, you don't provide
14 ombudsman services for any other problems or concerns
15 that companies are having, for instance, problems with
16 getting loans or other kinds of work that SBA oversees.

17 MR. GAY: Not capital access, but if you have an
18 issue with SBA, SBA is a federal agency. So, some of
19 the people that we have to ask for responses is here,
20 yeah. So, if you have -- a small business has any issue
21 with a federal agency --

22 MS. ROTH-DOUQUET: Including SBA?

23 MR. GAY: -- including SBA, send us a comment
24 form. Oh, yes, as -- yes, yes, yes. Yes, we do. We
25 have to -- I have to go and talk to some of my

1 colleagues here, and they -- sometimes they don't want
2 to see me, but it is what it is.

3 Yes, sir?

4 MR. O'FARRELL: Hi, Admiral. So, the
5 intersection of our committee's work with --

6 MR. PHIPPS: Please state your name.

7 MR. O'FARRELL: My name is Jim O'Farrell.

8 The intersection of our work with advising small
9 businesses and veteran-owned small businesses, whether
10 they be dealing with the federal sector or the private
11 sector exclusively, and your work as an ombudsman,
12 what -- do you see any trends? I know you said you've
13 been in the job two months, and maybe this is for you to
14 come back at a future -- for a future meeting, but the
15 intersection of veterans who are trying to start small
16 businesses, whether it's access to capital and
17 regulatory -- you know, things that the banking industry
18 is doing through the Federal Government to put
19 regulations in place that might stymie small businesses,
20 do you -- do you get cases involving veteran-owned small
21 businesses, A? What types of cases are they? Are there
22 any trends that you're seeing these days in that -- in
23 that domain? Thank you.

24 MR. GAY: You know, when Jaime and Barb asked me
25 to come down, I went straight to my case specialists and

1 asked them about that, because I told them I was coming
2 down to speak with you all. We don't ask that they
3 delineate that they are veteran-owned. We haven't done
4 that, and -- because we treat everybody the same. So, I
5 haven't -- I can't answer that.

6 Now, with the case management system that we
7 have, you know, we are asking if we can get some more
8 money to do some data mining so I can go in and see if
9 someone decides to put down that they're veteran-owned.
10 But I've already made a pact with Barb that any kind of
11 issues that come up that you all might have to utilize
12 us, let her know or you all can let me know, and then
13 we'll put them in the system. But I haven't seen any
14 trends yet. No, not yet, Jim.

15 MR. FIELDER: Earl, Ed Fielder.

16 MR. GAY: Yes, sir.

17 MR. FIELDER: I think it's kind of fortunate
18 that Larry got to go first and you got to go second,
19 because many of us have struggled as committee
20 members -- and, Larry, I would like to hear from you on
21 this, too -- but struggled as committee members because
22 we're networking in the veteran organizations in our
23 home states --

24 MR. GAY: Right.

25 MR. FIELDER: -- and in our regions, and we get

1 asked questions all the time that borderline on
2 advocacy, and I think as a result of the dos and don'ts,
3 I've seen -- I'm seeing for the first time there's an
4 opportunity for us, as we get those, that we know that
5 we can -- we -- we're in an advisory role, not in an
6 advocacy role, that when we get those and people come to
7 us, you would be the perfect person to turn those over.

8 MR. GAY: Bring them.

9 MR. FIELDER: And I just wanted to confirm that
10 that was, in fact, what I'm hearing.

11 MR. GAY: That is exactly what I am trying to
12 convey, and --

13 MR. FIELDER: Thank you, sir, because --

14 MR. GAY: -- that's what our job is.

15 MR. FIELDER: -- I'll have you on speed-dial
16 when people come to me.

17 MR. GAY: Oh, no problem. Bring it, bring it.
18 Make sure -- like I said, again, I'll bring a fact sheet
19 down so you all can have them. That's the first thing
20 I'll do when I leave here. I'll bring them back down
21 here. Yeah, but that's what we do, and -- and as far as
22 the veteran service organizations go, I had a little bit
23 of work with them over at OPM for a little bit before I
24 came over here, and very, very active, very, very
25 active.

1 So, my expectations for you all is to make sure
2 that you get the word out. We do outreach events. I'm
3 tired of D.C., so I need money so I can get out there
4 and travel and conduct the outreach events. People are
5 waiting for me and my deputy to come out, but we can't.

6 So, I went home for Thanksgiving -- I'm pretty
7 transparent. So, after I retired, I went back home, and
8 so I'm back to --

9 MR. FIELDER: Could I get one follow-up and then
10 I'd like to have Larry comment, but the follow-up would
11 be --

12 MR. GAY: What's that?

13 MR. FIELDER: -- is there an ombudsman -- if
14 there is, I haven't found it -- but is there an
15 ombudsman representative in the SBA regions, because
16 typically when we send people to get advice, they're
17 going to -- and I want to be careful how I say this -- a
18 bureaucrat that has a functional area within SBA at the
19 regional office --

20 MR. GAY: Well, that bureaucrat works for --

21 MR. FIELDER: -- but is there not some other
22 person --

23 MR. GAY: Let me speak now. Let me speak now.

24 MR. FIELDER: -- that can advocate --

25 MR. GAY: The district directors and the region

1 directors, they're there, they work for SBA, and they
2 understand what this job -- what this office does. So,
3 they are responsible and accountable for giving that
4 information out. So, the ombudsman lies here. If
5 you -- if you want to say there are regional ombudsmen,
6 I would say as a conduit to the Regional Fairness
7 Boards. But if you have any issues, just send them my
8 way.

9 So, what I was about to say was during the
10 Thanksgiving holiday, I was down in Atlanta, so I did
11 telework, which is new to me. So, I ended up visiting
12 the regional director there for the Southeast Region,
13 the state director, and then I went to the Georgia
14 Chamber of Commerce those two days. So, a lot of them
15 don't -- aren't aware of what we do. So, we've got to
16 get the word out. So, that's what I'm asking you all to
17 do.

18 MR. FIELDER: Larry, I just wanted you to
19 comment.

20 MR. WEBB: Well, my comment would be everything
21 that he said is, I think, absolutely true. To the
22 extent that there are regional concerns, as he
23 mentioned, you have the Regional Fairness Boards, so
24 that would be an opportunity. He's going to provide you
25 with more information about them. Obviously, the -- as

1 Mr. Gay has mentioned, the ombudsman's office deals with
2 challenges with other federal agencies. If a business
3 has a challenge with a state or local agency, that is
4 not necessarily the place to go; however, to the extent
5 that the district director, DDD, in the SBA offices or
6 the regional administrator can help either facilitate a
7 conversation or guide someone, that's sort of their role
8 as well.

9 So, they can be a really good resource, because
10 many of those district directors, bureaucrats
11 notwithstanding, have a great deal of knowledge about
12 their local offices. They know who to direct people to.
13 So, they could be a really great resource.

14 MR. GAY: And they are resources.

15 MR. WEBB: Yeah.

16 MR. GAY: We get about 400 cases a year, and
17 those are documented cases. There are probably maybe
18 three or four hundred that don't go -- that go
19 undocumented. That means that the regional
20 bureaucrats -- the term you used -- are doing their
21 damned job. So, we expect them to know their jobs and
22 do it, but, again, if you feel like they're not, then
23 you know where to go.

24 MR. WEBB: And, you know, I think that the only
25 followup I would say is if something does come to -- and

1 I hope I'm not giving you more work than is necessary,
2 but if something does come to the ombudsman's office and
3 they are not the office, surely they will pass it on to
4 the appropriate place to get it handled within the
5 agency or within the Federal Government.

6 MR. GAY: Oh, without a doubt.

7 All right, one more question.

8 MR. PHIPPS: Michael Phipps, one more question.

9 MR. GAY: Yes, sir.

10 MR. PHIPPS: So, is your annual report available
11 online for us to review or is that something internal to
12 the Government?

13 MR. GAY: No, no, it's -- hey, everything is
14 transparent here. As a matter of fact, I'll leave the
15 latest one we have with you right here. Mr. Chairman,
16 may I submit that for the record?

17 MR. PHIPPS: Thank you very much. So, what we
18 like to do for the benefit of the veteran businesses
19 that aren't able to attend, is anything we get
20 electronically, we'd like to post online. Is that
21 something we can do on the advisory committee's Web
22 site, Barb?

23 MS. CARSON: If it's a public record, yes, we
24 can.

25 MR. PHIPPS: Excellent.

1 MR. WEBB: You should be able to get the report
2 I believe on the -- ONO's Web site. Look under SBA, it
3 should be posted there.

4 MR. GAY: Yes. And like I said, I'm going to
5 bring down the ONO fact sheet -- I'll give this to you,
6 Mr. Chairman, just for the record.

7 MR. PHIPPS: And we will help get the word out
8 just by posting this information on our site as well,
9 so -- which has an SBA link.

10 MR. GAY: Right, roger that. So, my email -- I
11 passed out a few cards, but it's pretty simple,
12 earl.gay@sba.gov, over -- smart, bold, and accessible.
13 Oh, oh, oh, thank you. Thanks so much. I'll pass them
14 out this way. See, we work as a team. They felt it.
15 One team, one fight. I think we -- do we have enough
16 for everyone? I'll still go up and bring some more
17 down.

18 If you look at it, I think on the back side of
19 that, they have some frequently asked questions -- oh,
20 thanks -- and I can come back. I'll be here all day. I
21 know we have a Christmas party, and we are moving to the
22 third floor, but I will be here all day. Give me a
23 call. If you have any issues, you can come straight to
24 me, okay? So, I'll offer that to everyone, not just my
25 brothers and sisters in arms, but everyone.

1 MR. PHIPPS: We would like the ability to ask
2 you back for future committee meetings if we have any
3 additional questions, if that would be all right.

4 MR. GAY: Sure. Any more questions at all?
5 I'll come back down later, so if you all have any
6 questions in your mind, I'll make a stop by later on,
7 and I'll look at the schedule. What time are you all
8 breaking for lunch?

9 MR. PHIPPS: 12:00.

10 MR. GAY: 12:00.

11 MR. PHIPPS: Which always runs over.

12 MR. GAY: Roger that. I'll tell you what, I'll
13 come back around 1-ish or so, and I can just tell by the
14 mannerisms, okay, we don't need you, I'll go back out.
15 I'll figure it out. But I'll stop back by and do a
16 fly-by -- I'm sorry, a pass-through to see if anyone has
17 any questions, okay?

18 All right. Well, thanks again for what you all
19 are doing. As a veteran, it's very important, and who
20 knows? After I'm done with this job, I might be coming
21 back to you all for advice. So, stand by.

22 MR. PHIPPS: Thank you very much, Admiral Gay.

23 MR. GAY: Thank you, sir.

24 MR. PHIPPS: Okay. Next on the agenda is going
25 to be Ray Milano with a VBOC update.

1 MR. MILANO: All right. Good morning,
2 everybody. As the slide says, my name is Ray Milano. I
3 am the new director of the Veterans Business Outreach
4 Center program. I'm not going to go into my background
5 right now. I'm going to talk for about 15 minutes about
6 the VBOC and what's going on with the VBOC. I'll be
7 coming back to talk about access to capital, and I'll go
8 more into my background with SBA and the history there.

9 So, just a quick review, how many people have
10 heard of the Veteran Business Outreach Center program?
11 All right, that's good. That's good. That's what we
12 want to hear. Everybody will get a copy of these
13 slides, but the VBOCs -- we have 15 VBOCs, Veteran
14 Business Outreach Centers, across the country. They're
15 not technically regional based, but there is one in
16 every SBA region with the exception of Region I, as far
17 as located within the region, but we do have coverage
18 for all 50 states and territories that the SBA covers.
19 So, we have a VBOC that covers every state and every
20 territory that the SBA has a district office in, okay?

21 The VBOCs are part of the SBA Resource Partner
22 Network. So, you know, most people are familiar with
23 SCORE, the Small Business Development Center program,
24 the Women's Business Center program. VBOC's a part of
25 that resource network, and, you know, that's something

1 coming on board that we want to make sure that people
2 understand. They're there just like the other resource
3 partners.

4 Again, all district offices have a VBOC under
5 their umbrella. VBOC directors -- you know, so VBOCs
6 are usually comprised of, you know, probably two or
7 three employees. There's a director and then maybe a
8 couple other staff members. These are experienced
9 business advisors, educators, business owners, industry
10 experts.

11 Similar to the SBDCs, a lot of the VBOC
12 directors are former SBDC directors, former SCORE
13 mentors, former Women's Business Center advisors. So,
14 these are people who have stayed within the SBA network,
15 just in another capacity to serve, you know, veterans,
16 service members, military spouses.

17 There's a list all the VBOCs up there. I know
18 it's hard to read. I'll pull up a map, and you can kind
19 of see, you know, where the VBOCs are located across the
20 country. So, you know, there's Seattle. There's
21 Sacramento. We have one in Montana. We have one in New
22 Mexico, southern Texas. We have one in Michigan. We
23 have one in Missouri. We have one in Chicago,
24 Mississippi State University. We have one in Panama
25 City, Florida. We have one at Fayetteville State

1 University in North Carolina. We have one in
2 Springfield, Virginia, one in Hampton Roads, Virginia.
3 We have one in Albany, New York, and then we have one in
4 Syracuse New York that covers the New England region.
5 Okay, so you can see they're spread out.

6 Hopefully what you can see from this map is room
7 for growth for VBOCs, and, you know, that's part of my
8 mission with the Veteran Business Outreach Center
9 program, is to find out where the demand is, where the
10 need is as far as the veteran population, the
11 active-duty bases, and, you know, where we could -- some
12 new VBOCs could be located. I could probably name ten
13 right now where there's demand and we could land a VBOC.

14 So, I'm working with Barb and the Office of
15 Veterans Business Development to figure out, along with
16 our other programs and services, where, if we do expand
17 the VBOC program, where they could be located. And
18 obviously your input and your guidance and your thoughts
19 on that obviously would be appreciated as we move
20 forward.

21 So, the VBOC, it looks pretty lonely by itself,
22 right? Fifteen across the country, only two or three
23 people, you know, they cover -- most VBOCs cover an
24 average of three to four states, so pretty difficult you
25 would think, but if you look at -- you know, you add

1 some of the SBA programs to it, so, you know -- and you
2 start surrounding the VBOC with all these resources and
3 programs and organizations, you say, wow, you know, the
4 VBOC can accomplish something with all these programs
5 and resources.

6 So, the VBOC is connected with all these
7 programs and resources you see on the screen. I have
8 SBA that came up on the bottom, so every district
9 office, every SBA program office, the VBOC is connected
10 with. And these are just the formal partners and
11 programs. So, obviously, this committee, the
12 Interagency Task Force, all the -- you know, the local
13 state directors for veterans services, all the local
14 directors for veterans services, all the interagencies,
15 so the VA, Department of Labor, Department of Defense,
16 we're connected. So, this is all part of our resource
17 network that the VBOC is connected with.

18 And that's part of my job, is to make sure each
19 VBOC is educated and knowledgeable about the programs
20 and resources available to them that they can plug into.
21 So, as you know, I took over this position in May, and
22 that's been my job so far, so to find out where the
23 VBOCs are as far as education and knowledge and
24 communication with a lot of the SBA programs and
25 resources and, you know, where we need to get to and

1 make that happen.

2 VBOCs work for you. So, again, you know, the
3 mission of VBOCs basically, when they were instituted,
4 was to assist with transition assistance, okay? And
5 transition assistance, the definition of that has really
6 morphed over the last ten years or so, right? So,
7 originally, it was the regular TAP program, the
8 Transition Assistance Program, you know, a one-week
9 program. Everybody had to go. You're put in a room,
10 and, you know, the agencies and the resources paraded
11 through and told you what was available as you
12 transitioned out. And maybe SBA was 15 or 20 minutes
13 during that week-long period, and the VBOCs were there
14 to kind of assist with that.

15 Well, you take it to today with the TAP GPS, and
16 now we have Boots to Business and Boots to Business
17 Reboot, and we have two-day programs for
18 entrepreneurship, for education, for employment. You
19 know, SBA's working with DoL, DoD, the VA to provide
20 these services. The VBOCs have adapted to take care of
21 that.

22 So, the VBOCs are involved in the Boots to
23 Business program, the Boots to Business Reboot program,
24 the Hiring our Heroes program, the U.S. Chamber of
25 Commerce, you know, the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration

1 Program with the Department of Defense. So, the VBOCs,
2 that is their primary mission, okay? They're out there
3 to provide this transition assistance, mainly with
4 training seminars and educational events.

5 They do do some counseling and training, but
6 that is secondary, because as you can imagine, you know,
7 with only 15 across the country, one-on-one counseling
8 is kind of, you know, a heavy lift for a lot of the
9 VBOCs if you're out of their state. The one thing, when
10 we talk about training and counseling, is -- to go back
11 to the previous slide -- is we're connected with all the
12 resource partners.

13 So, one thing that the VBOCs really do well is
14 provide referrals to the other SBA resource partners.
15 So, the SBDCs, SCORE, the Women's Business Centers, the
16 VBOCs really know who they are in the states within
17 their region. So, if somebody -- you know, if we have a
18 VBOC in Chicago and their coverage area includes
19 Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota, and they get in
20 touch with somebody from Minnesota, you know, they are
21 going to provide information to a certain point, but
22 they are going to connect them to people in Minnesota
23 within that SBA network that they could talk to right
24 away, meet with. If they need a mentor, they need a
25 training program, they need a business advisor, and they

1 will be able to plug them in right away. That's the
2 level of knowledge and connection that we want the VBOCs
3 to be at, okay?

4 Marketing and promotion. So, you know, you're
5 all business owners. You know, VBOCs are out there.
6 You know, you think of veterans service organizations
7 out there and other SBA resource partners. VBOCs get
8 funding from the SBA, and they have some flexibility
9 with funding and promotion of programs and services
10 related to veterans, service members, and military
11 spouses.

12 So, if you're looking to fund promotional
13 events, do flyers, do social media outreach,
14 client-based database, you know, VBOCs have databases
15 that you could utilize to connect with. You know, so
16 the VBOCs -- we have videos that promote, you know, the
17 Boots to Business program, success stories through the
18 VBOCs.

19 One of the things we're trying to do is to
20 highlight all the OVBD programs, especially the VBOCs,
21 so through success stories and videos. We have the
22 funding, luckily, to go out and do videos about, you
23 know, veterans that have gone through the programs,
24 utilized the VBOCs, utilized the Boots to Business
25 programs, gotten a loan through the SBA, and where

1 they've gotten to, because we know through experience,
2 just like all you know, that, you know, those real
3 stories are what make the most impact.

4 You know, I could talk all day about the
5 programs and services that SBA has and all the
6 resources, but if you get a business owner that comes up
7 here and says, "Hey, I started a business, I used a
8 VBOC, you know, I went to SBDC, I took the Boots to
9 Business program, you know, I got a government contract,
10 I got, you know, a CAPLines loan, and this is where I am
11 today. You know, that's going to carry a lot more
12 weight and we know that.

13 So, one of the things we are doing is
14 highlighting those success stories. So, as you're out
15 there and you see those success stories, feel free to
16 push them up our way, because we're paying attention to
17 that, too.

18 So, that's a quick overview of the VBOC. Like I
19 said, I'm going to be back again in probably about a
20 half hour to talk about financing, and I'll give you a
21 lot more information on myself, but if you have any
22 questions on the VBOCs, the mission of the VBOCs, you
23 want to be connected with the VBOC in your area, you
24 want to leverage them and their -- you know, their
25 funding and their database and their network and

1 relationships, you know, definitely feel free to connect
2 with me. I can make that happen.

3 Again, the VBOCs work for you. They are a part
4 of the SBA, and I work with the VBOCs. I speak with
5 them on a daily basis to make sure they have the
6 information they need and that they're connected and
7 they're not running into any roadblocks out there.

8 So, any initial questions on the VBOC program?

9 MR. AUMENT: How did you choose the locations
10 for these initial sites? They seem kind of random.

11 MR. MILANO: Right, so that's a good question.
12 So, I came in in May, so just when the selection process
13 was happening, but I can tell you that during this grant
14 process period -- so, the VBOCs currently started in May
15 of this year, and their grants run through April of
16 2018, okay? So, it's a three-year -- so, it's a one
17 year plus two option years for the current VBOC grant
18 program.

19 So, the VBOCs were selected by their
20 submissions. So, there wasn't specific regions called
21 out. So, it wasn't saying we're looking for a VBOC in
22 California, New York, Florida, Texas, Missouri. What
23 happened was we said we were looking for VBOCs to cover
24 the country, submit a regional or a coverage area, and
25 give us a background on how you're going to provide

1 services and programs and what your connection is to
2 veteran business outreach, and the best 15 VBOCs -- and
3 it was capability, capacity, and coverage area. You
4 know, that's kind of how I looked at it when I came in
5 in May.

6 Again, it was further down the road with the
7 process, but when we were looking at kind of the final
8 selection process, you know, basically -- again,
9 capability of the organization to provide the services,
10 capacity to cover their region that they were talking
11 about, right? So, if they said they were going to cover
12 a five-state region, did they have that capacity and
13 were they going to be able to do it with the funding
14 they were requesting, right? And then the coverage
15 area. Was the coverage area -- did it all fit together?

16 Obviously, we didn't want to have -- you know,
17 if the 15 best VBOCs that were, you know, submitted were
18 all from New York, obviously we weren't going to pick 15
19 VBOCs in New York. So, we had to look and see, okay,
20 you know, where were the coverage areas and where it fit
21 best.

22 You know, there's -- there's no doubt that we
23 could use more VBOCs, and, you know, like I say, I could
24 roll off ten right now that we could plop down in a
25 state and they could be up and running have the demand

1 that they need. So, we're going to -- you know, we're
2 kind of swimming upstream as far as coverage area right
3 now, but the utilization of the other SBA programs and
4 resource partners within those areas really help us
5 leverage and get the mission out. So, I hope that helps
6 a little bit.

7 MR. AUMENT: Could I have just one followup
8 question? Ron Aument again.

9 MR. MILANO: Yes.

10 MR. AUMENT: I don't know if you've had any
11 conversations at all with the Department of Labor, but
12 they've got a very large grant program for veteran
13 employment issues that goes out to every single state in
14 the country on this, and I know that there's already
15 sort of an infrastructure base there that seems to have
16 some sort of potential synergy, I believe, with --
17 between employment and entrepreneurship on that. Have
18 you had any discussions with Labor?

19 MR. MILANO: We do. So, we work with Department
20 of Labor and the Vets Program, so -- especially under
21 transition assistance. So, they are on our team. We
22 meet with Department of Labor on a regular basis,
23 weekly, to talk about transition assistance for veterans
24 and also prior service veterans within the community.

25 So, we are working with VA, Department of Labor,

1 and DoD, because we don't want to recreate the wheel,
2 right? We're all part of the same, you know,
3 government. If it's already there, in place, and we can
4 enhance what's already there, we're going to go for that
5 and make that happen. So, we are looking at that.

6 MR. ZACCHEA: So, Ray, can you speak to the
7 prospects going forward of creating additional VBOCs
8 given a couple of what I consider possibly contradictory
9 forces? One, the demographic trends for veterans
10 leaving service coming forward versus -- business
11 startups versus budgetary concerns for the SBA or the
12 overall Federal Government.

13 MR. MILANO: Yeah. So, as we look forward and,
14 you know, I look for the demand, initially, we look at
15 the mission of the VBOCs to provide transition
16 assistance. So, you know, there are projections over
17 the next five years, whatever -- you hear everything
18 from 190,000 a year to 250,000 a year transitioning out
19 of the military. So, we pay attention to those numbers.
20 Barb and members of our team work with DoD and DoL, you
21 know, weekly and get those numbers.

22 So, projected out over the next five years and
23 looking at transition assistance and the need for, you
24 know, Boots to Business and Boots to Business Reboot and
25 the Hiring our Heroes program and the Yellow Ribbon

1 Reintegration program, that's the first mission of the
2 VBOCs, and there is demand right now. We see demand,
3 you know, going five, eight years out right now, right?

4 But you're right, it depends on budget. So,
5 right now, the VBOC is -- the VBOCs are legislated,
6 Office of Veterans Business Development, the Boots to
7 Business program under that -- our program is
8 legislative money. The Boots -- the VBOC program is
9 legislative funds. So, it's not program funds from SBA.
10 It's actually legislative funds from Congress to operate
11 the VBOCs.

12 So, if we could show the demand out there, you
13 know, this money has to be legislated and given to us
14 from Congress to expand these VBOCs. So, we would have
15 to either -- so, just for an example, you know, you look
16 at -- if you have more VBOCs, it might cost less to run
17 a VBOC because they have less coverage area, right?

18 So, if we had a VBOC covering one state rather
19 than four states, it's probably going to cost less for
20 that VBOC to cover one state. So, if you could add
21 another VBOC in that area, maybe you could use the
22 similar funding to expand the program incrementally.
23 So, that's part of what we're looking at based on demand
24 in each area.

25 But right now we don't see any falloff in

1 demand, whether it's transitioning veterans or prior
2 service veterans and National Guard and Reserve looking
3 to start or grow their business. And, you know,
4 emphasis on "grow their business," you know, because a
5 lot of them are transitioning out, looking to start
6 businesses, but there are a lot of veterans out there
7 that own businesses, and they need that next level of
8 scaled-up technical assistance and what's out there to
9 do practice. You know, we want the VBOCs to be able to
10 provide that, too, and be used as a resource for those
11 type of businesses at the same time.

12 MR. ZACCHEA: Could I have a followup?

13 MR. MILANO: Yeah.

14 MR. ZACCHEA: All right. So, Mike Zacchea
15 again.

16 So, would it be fair to say that if there was a
17 reasonable case to be made for an expansion of the VBOC
18 program, that you think that -- and I don't want you to
19 answer for Congress -- but that you could make a
20 reasonable case to Congress to expand the VBOC program?

21 MR. MILANO: I think so, and that's the data
22 we're compiling right now. There's a lot of data out
23 there, and we're -- again, we're looking at, you know,
24 the increase in the Boots to Business numbers, the
25 Reboot numbers, the Hiring our Heroes summits, the

1 Yellow Ribbon, but all that data we're looking at,
2 seeing the trends -- and the trends are going up. We'll
3 talk a little bit about access to capital later on, and
4 you'll see some trends going up.

5 So, as long as the demand is there and we get a
6 lot of interest from the Hill, so to speak, and they
7 know they're getting it from their constituents, you
8 know, veterans -- everybody knows the data, more likely
9 to start a business than the civilian population, more
10 likely to succeed, all that good stuff, and so we're
11 paying attention to that.

12 And we would have to make that case. We would
13 have to say, you know, with the dollars we have now, we
14 might be able to stretch another two or three VBOCs,
15 depending on where they're located, but to do a large
16 expansion, we would need substantial more dollars to
17 make that happen.

18 MR. ZACCHEA: That's very helpful. Thank you.

19 MR. MILANO: Yeah. Another question?

20 MR. GARCIA: Just a comment statement. Ray,
21 first I want to just thank you for the work you're
22 doing. The VBOCs, in my opinion, are extremely
23 important. I think they're key to assisting veteran
24 business development out in the states. Because I'm
25 representing NASDVA, National Association of State

1 Directors of Veterans Affairs, I guess one question --
2 I've got two -- is does the SBA fund the states'
3 directors directly?

4 Because to me, the state directors of veterans
5 affairs are very key to the success of the VBOCs. The
6 states, collectively, each state directors collectively,
7 they put out about 6 to 7 billion dollars -- I was
8 telling you this earlier today --

9 MR. MILANO: Right.

10 MR. GARCIA: -- they have the resources to hire
11 on the key people, to provide the resources. The main
12 function of a state is to find the veterans to get them
13 to file for their benefits, because 70 percent of our
14 vets have not filed for their benefits. So, one of the
15 key ways to do that is if you do veteran business
16 outreach, you help the vet file for his benefits he's
17 now entitled to -- entitlement is not the right word --
18 but he's entitled to a Public Law 108, as a
19 service-disabled vet, to seek out veteran national
20 contracts.

21 In my state, when we set up a veteran business
22 resource office, in the first two years, we brought in
23 \$40 million of federal contracts. So, I know the thing
24 works, but when we also would do these veteran
25 stand-downs for veteran businesses, our numbers were

1 huge in terms of veterans showing up to learn about
2 veteran business development but also to file for their
3 benefits. So, it's a win-win-win when you do it that
4 way.

5 So, I'm just asking you to consider working
6 closely with the states. For example, Wisconsin, you
7 know, his budget is \$116 million. I mean, for him to
8 set up and stand up a veteran business resource center
9 is something they want to do, but the association is
10 trying to find out if the SBA will fund NASDVA or each
11 state individually.

12 I was told that they made an exception in New
13 Mexico, when I was state director there, to fund New
14 Mexico through the state. So, they're funding a lot of
15 nonprofits, but when the VA goes out to outreach with
16 them, many times I find the VBOC isn't aware of what the
17 VA's trying to do, and the VA's not aware that the
18 VBOC's out there, and so there's a huge disconnect.

19 So, one of the big challenges is to connect the
20 VBOCs with those providers, DoL, the VA, in some kind of
21 formal way that we can do it. So, to me, the VBOCs are
22 key. You have got a great task ahead of you. And, if
23 anything, one thing we can do in this committee is
24 provide some guidance and support for what you're trying
25 to do in those VBOCs.

1 MR. MILANO: John, I appreciate it.

2 So, as far as the state agencies, so New Mexico
3 is funded. So, the VBOC -- we have one in New Mexico,
4 and it's done through the State Department of Veterans
5 Services.

6 MR. GARCIA: Right. If I may interrupt, the key
7 thing with that was when, for example -- I'm just using
8 New Mexico as an example -- when we got 150,000 from the
9 SBA through the state, I was able to go before our
10 legislative body to match that with 150,000.

11 MR. MILANO: Right.

12 MR. GARCIA: Oregon did this -- not Oregon,
13 Seattle -- excuse me, Oregon did the same thing, but
14 they went for 500,000, and their legislative body gave
15 them \$500,000 to set up their veteran business resource
16 center. I didn't know if it was on your map, but they
17 have a veteran business resource office.

18 MR. MILANO: Right.

19 MR. GARCIA: The State of Washington has a
20 veteran business resource office, and many of them have
21 a veteran business resource office set up that's not
22 funded by the SBA.

23 MR. MILANO: Right.

24 MR. GARCIA: So, some of these entities you
25 have, they are nonprofit organizations, and you have a

1 state entity.

2 MR. MILANO: Correct, nonprofits, state
3 entities, and educational institutions.

4 MR. GARCIA: Okay.

5 MR. MILANO: Okay? But the only state entity
6 right now is New Mexico.

7 MR. GARCIA: Right.

8 MR. MILANO: And so what one concern or
9 challenge we have with state entities is budget, too.
10 So, when you're getting funding from a federal agency
11 and a state agency, you know, usually both aren't going
12 to be funded the same way every year, meaning, you know,
13 cuts in budget, et cetera, but that's not a prohibitive
14 factor, meaning it is a factor when we're looking at
15 them.

16 You know, I have just been through one round of
17 the VBOC selections, so, you know, in three years, we're
18 going to have another solicitation for 15 VBOCs across
19 the country, at a minimum, and see what happens, and
20 open -- and we're looking at that process, how that's
21 going to run in three years.

22 But -- so, there's no -- so, I understand what
23 you're saying, and, you know, John, you know, he knows a
24 little bit about my background with SBA up at Boston.
25 So, you know, I did work with the state director for

1 veterans services up there, so I know how it could work,
2 and it could work well, but usually it's a one-off,
3 right? It takes certain people that want to make it
4 happen -- outside the box to make it happen, and we want
5 that to be the norm, not the exception, going forward.

6 I think, you know, working with this committee,
7 with OVBD and other agency partners, I think that's
8 where we're going to get to.

9 MR. GARCIA: Yeah. If I may just add to this,
10 Ray, Mr. Chairman, Ms. Carson, I think it's important
11 that -- because this is a federal agency, it is a
12 political entity that we are representing here. The
13 states are political, so are their governors and so are
14 their mayors, and if we have going to have any major
15 impact, you have got to go that route, I think.

16 These states are begging for these kinds of
17 initiatives, and I think if you went to a state and
18 you've got the governor engaged and you've got the state
19 director engaged, legislative body is engaged, as we
20 spoke even earlier, you've got the National Legislative
21 Committee -- National Elected Legislative Committee,
22 you've got the National Conference of Mayors, the
23 National Governors Association. If they're aware of
24 this, they begin to fund it and they support it, and
25 it's a lot -- I think you're bringing more muscle to

1 your VBOCs than just funding a nonprofit. And I have
2 nothing against the nonprofit, but I just think you're
3 bringing in this stronger resource.

4 MR. MILANO: Right, right, agreed. I appreciate
5 the comments, and I look forward to working with you,
6 John, and the committee kind of making this happen.

7 MR. GARCIA: Thank you, Ray.

8 MR. PHIPPS: Just as a note, we have asked Ray
9 to come in to every meeting to give a VBOC update, as
10 Barb does. So, at the next meeting we're going to get
11 more into the VBOCs and keep that dialogue going.

12 MR. GARCIA: Very good. Thanks.

13 MR. PHIPPS: So, if there's no more questions --

14 MS. CARSON: Jim O'Farrell.

15 MR. O'FARRELL: Jim O'Farrell with a question,
16 Ray.

17 So, if you're coming back to the next meeting,
18 could you -- could you be prepared to talk a little bit
19 about the -- the briefing you gave this morning has, as
20 you see on the screen, a list of the capabilities of the
21 VBOC. Could you bring a few examples of where it's
22 worked and map kind of the life cycle process of someone
23 who's still wearing Army boots or Navy boondockers and
24 they take them off and they become an entrepreneur and
25 how that works?

1 You know, I really agree with what Mr. Garcia
2 was saying, is we can in some ways advocate on the
3 behalf of the VBOCs and put something into our report,
4 the next report we do, but I think it would be helpful
5 for us to understand, you know, what -- how does this
6 really work at the grass roots level? You know, what do
7 a couple of success stories look like?

8 And going back to what the ombudsman gave us
9 today with the slick sheet, if we have any of those from
10 the VBOCs, that might be helpful, too.

11 MR. MILANO: Yep, without a doubt. So, this is
12 just the first of a long relationship, and I'll bring
13 that next time. Thank you.

14 MR. MCADAMS: Mr. Chairman, Rich McAdams, if I
15 could, real quick. I just want to throw in anecdotal
16 evidence. For that very reason, Jim, I went to a Boots
17 to Business event that was at Redstone Arsenal, just
18 because I wanted -- I had heard the term 56 times on the
19 one day I was on the committee, and it was amazing. It
20 was phenomenally well done.

21 And I would encourage you, if you get a chance,
22 spend at least the first day, see the material, see how
23 well it's done. And one of the things that struck me
24 with how well it's done is they equally emphasize
25 business may not be for you, which I think is a -- one

1 of the best take-aways a guy can have, far better than
2 making it easy for him to borrow a bunch of money and
3 ruin his credit for the rest of his life.

4 MR. PHIPPS: Okay. We're going to take a short
5 break, and when we come back, Barb's going to give us an
6 update on OVBD, and Ray will get into access to capital.
7 We will reconvene at 10:35, a ten-minute break.

8 (A brief recess was taken.)

9 MR. PHIPPS: All right, everybody. We're going
10 to get started.

11 Okay. So, next on the agenda is going to be
12 Barb Carson that we want to congratulate for now being
13 the acting --

14 MS. CARSON: No longer the acting.

15 MR. PHIPPS: I mean no longer being the acting,
16 being appointed, and it's no longer a political
17 appointee, if I understand?

18 MS. CARSON: I never was, but the position has
19 changed to -- it's a career appointment to be the
20 associate administrator for Office of Veterans Business
21 Development. Thanks for the congratulations. I am very
22 honored to serve in this role, as officially appointed
23 on the 1st of November, after acting for 13 months. So,
24 I am very --

25 MR. PHIPPS: Excellent, congratulations.

1 (Applause.)

2 MS. CARSON: Thanks.

3 MR. PHIPPS: So, now we will hear from Barb with
4 the OVBD update.

5 MS. CARSON: Thank you, Chair. I appreciate
6 that. You know that I speak quickly, and my Chicago
7 roots haven't changed, so it will sound a bit like an
8 auction as I try to keep you on your schedule, but I, of
9 course, will pause for any questions you may have. I'll
10 also commit to you that after lunch we will have copies
11 of these slides, both Ray's, mine, and then the folks
12 that are going to come in and speak to you this
13 afternoon, so that you can read more than that eye
14 chart.

15 As the ombudsman said as well, we will have
16 those things posted online, so that those who are not
17 able to join us in this room have access to all the
18 information that was provided to you here in person.

19 For Office of Veterans Business Development,
20 you've been with me every quarter. We have had exciting
21 years, and these last three months are no different. I
22 am going to start internally and then move out on what
23 else has happened for us.

24 We've added team members, and that, as you all
25 know as business owners, is exciting. We're still in

1 the forming/storming. We've been in that for a couple
2 years as our team has changed, our mission has grown.
3 We have even reorganized our structure, and I am
4 thrilled to have two new people that I want to highlight
5 today on our team.

6 Amy Garcia is here on our right. She has been
7 with SBA since 2009, specially focused on
8 service-disabled, veteran-owned small business protests.
9 She knows procurement inside, outside, has great
10 relationships with our colleagues in the government
11 contracting business development world, which we are
12 grateful for, and we rely on her.

13 She also is a former small business owner
14 herself and has legislative staff experience. She comes
15 to us on this team to serve in a policy role as we bring
16 everything together, to make sure that across all of our
17 portfolios and efforts, that the things we do are
18 strategic, that we communicate them well to every level
19 where we should, whether it's in our agency, it's to the
20 President, to our Administrator, and to veterans
21 themselves who want to start and grow their businesses.
22 So, I am grateful for you, Amy, joining our team.

23 We also have Jerry Godwin, next to Amy, a
24 service-disabled vet, Army. He -- hopefully we will get
25 to put him on the spot at the next meeting and he can

1 tell you more about what his role will be on our team.
2 He has just joined us -- it's been six weeks,
3 perhaps? -- and he will focus on access to capital
4 policy as well as procurement policy.

5 In the past, OVBD did have a procurement
6 liaison, and they really treated it as a one-on-one
7 business space mentor for those who were in the D.C.
8 area. I don't believe that's the role that we should
9 have. Jerry will be tasked to work with OSDBUs, what
10 are service-disabled vets doing in each agency as far as
11 their procurement; what could they be doing better; what
12 are the gaps or obstacles that are preventing them from
13 having more success in those opportunities. Some of
14 this is something we're accountable for, building their
15 capacity. So, Jerry has an important role there.

16 For access to capital as well, we have had a
17 great year. We want to make it more than just a -- one
18 outstanding year. Let's build this into a trend.
19 There's a lot that we have to learn and then act on.
20 So, I'm counting on Jerry to do that. He also is a
21 former business owner, successful exits, and he has
22 served at Montgomery County, starting and growing an
23 incredible network of accelerators and incubators. So,
24 I look forward to him advising us on -- and our Office
25 of Innovation and Investment -- thank you -- SBIC, SBIR.

1 This man knows about all of it and can bring some
2 real-world personal experience to us.

3 So, there are some who may stereotype what a vet
4 business is, what sectors they're in, what size they
5 might be. He, like others, blows that out of the water.
6 So, we are -- I feel we have built a comprehensive team
7 that has a wide world view of experience they've walked
8 themselves and things that they're studying and growing
9 to do for our team. So, that's what we've been doing
10 internally. Thanks for joining us, Jerry.

11 Also, internally, the gap analysis. You heard
12 briefly about it last quarter, 400-plus pages of things
13 that we could be doing better and, thrillingly,
14 recommendations on how to start going about that. What
15 would be the priority of effort that we should put
16 forward? Because what can have the biggest impact with
17 the lowest number of resources required, that's
18 obviously where I am going to go first.

19 So, thank you, Chair, for your leadership on
20 that, and you will see that again in its final form
21 soon. I'm trusting the advisory committee with that
22 first, because I do count on your advice and counsel as
23 we move out. I'm very pleased to have John Garcia join
24 us on this team as we look at the better connections
25 that could exist across VA at state levels, and he

1 absolutely understands, being a former Deputy Assistant
2 Secretary at VA, where those opportunities and gaps are.

3 He shares the same heart-felt belief that Ray
4 and I do and the rest of my team, that you can have
5 amazing policies at the national level, but if they
6 aren't available and known about and consistent in the
7 local level, it doesn't mean a thing. So, I look
8 forward to your leadership, Mr. Garcia, in joining us in
9 this effort.

10 The Interagency Task Force -- I'm still
11 internal, but moving a little broader now -- that meets
12 tomorrow, and it was former Chairman Fielder's desire --
13 and we have now enacted it -- that a member of the
14 advisory committee will also serve on the Interagency
15 Task Force for Veterans Small Business Development.
16 That representative is Davy Leghorn of the American
17 Legion. That will be the connection between these two
18 bodies. I'm sure there are many others. You're always
19 welcome to attend this public meeting, but I want you to
20 know that you have other channels now for your work to
21 be enacted.

22 And finally, you met the ombudsman. He can't
23 have favorites among his businesses that he serves, but
24 I am very pleased already with, just six weeks on the
25 job, how much interaction I have had with him, his broad

1 understanding, and his desire to learn more about what
2 we can do.

3 I do, by statute, also have a role as an
4 ombudsman for veteran small business owners. I will not
5 act separately from the national ombudsman, but I have
6 made him aware of that role that I have and that we do
7 have a connected -- very connected relationship moving
8 forward that he knows about. And I do also intend to
9 share some of our travel with him so that we can do
10 things for veteran small business owners in the coming
11 year, in addition to the work that he already does on a
12 regional level.

13 Any questions on the internal circles so far?

14 (No response.)

15 MS. CARSON: Okay, I am going to keep plowing on
16 with the good things. I am going to break the next
17 three into entrepreneurial, development and outreach,
18 and access to capital and procurement, three things, our
19 core missions.

20 A big quarter for us for outreach in a few
21 places. National Veterans Small Business Week that I
22 told you all about happened the first week of November,
23 with national events which were great. Our
24 Administrator participated in three of them, the launch
25 of Boots to Business Reboot, which is a public-private

1 partnership with the Institute for Vets and Military
2 Families, The Marcus Foundation, and First Data
3 Corporation. That was launched in Boston with great
4 assistance from our district office there.

5 That, again, is using the Boots to Business
6 curriculum, which we use for transitioning service
7 members and spouses on military installations, bringing
8 that out into the community, to reach Reserve and Guard
9 and veterans of all eras who did not have that same
10 transition assistance experience available to them.

11 The deputy administrator also spoke on access to
12 capital in Baltimore, but more meaningful is how many
13 veterans were interacting with us, face to face, in
14 training events across the nation. Over 6000 veterans
15 received services from SBA and its resource partners in
16 just that one week, at over 160 events across the United
17 States. That is fantastic, and I am really proud of it,
18 and we can do a lot more.

19 I think there are -- your representation from
20 all the areas that you come from across the United
21 States is something that's going to endure. This was
22 our third one. I would really like to be more strategic
23 about what we choose to get done this coming November
24 for veterans across the U.S. So far, we have found
25 great interest in access to capital, agree that there's

1 a lot of focus on the startup. What more could we do
2 for the growing businesses that already exist? Is there
3 anything for success planning as older veteran
4 businesses are looking to perhaps turn it over to
5 another vet, just another thing that we hear anecdotally
6 that we may be -- have an opportunity to grow into.

7 Ray Milano has been my battle buddy on reaching
8 out to warrior transition units on the three services
9 and with Special Operations Command. He has the trust
10 of a number of the agencies to be that single point of
11 contact right now. As we look at the wounded, ill, and
12 injured who are leaving the services, they often have
13 their own transition experience separate from Boots to
14 Business, and there are also other programs and
15 connections that need to be made for that population,
16 whether it's the VA and VR -- the Voc Rehab and
17 employment, or the local opportunities and resources
18 that are available. So, Ray has been a great leader in
19 that arena, and we will have a more full update for you
20 in March on what exactly we hope to achieve there and
21 what we've been asked to do.

22 And another population that we talk about often
23 and I want to serve better is the military spouse. So,
24 in January of 2016, SBA will join the Department of
25 Defense Military Spouse Employment Program in launching

1 a once-a-month webinar for spouses on entrepreneurship
2 and small business ownership. Ray Milano, again, has a
3 lead in this effort.

4 We're convening on the 17th of this month
5 because, you know, I shouldn't generate all the good
6 ideas. Maybe you should check in with the population
7 you're to serve and make sure that you're going the
8 right way, so we're meeting with a number of
9 organizations that have partnered with us before in
10 efforts to provide small business opportunities to
11 military spouses. That includes Blue Star Family, it
12 includes The Rosie Network, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce
13 Foundation, MilitaryOneClick, obviously DoD, the
14 Institute for Veterans and Military Families, are among
15 the partners who will join us.

16 Again, in March, I'll have -- I will tell you
17 what our strategy is broadly, and, Kathy, I'd appreciate
18 it if you spoke up and correct any misstatements I make
19 on this, but of approximately 900,000 military spouses,
20 the unemployment rate is in the double digits. It was
21 about 20 percent.

22 MS. ROTH-DOUQUET: (Off mic.)

23 MS. CARSON: It was 26 percent unemployed
24 military spouses. You may know some of the challenges,
25 and they are -- portability is one of them. So, the --

1 having to move every two to three years is incredibly
2 disruptive to a professional career, as I know from my
3 own experience, but there is plenty. Thanks to Blue
4 Star Families, for example, for their comprehensive
5 survey of military families. We know what the need is,
6 and employment makes a big difference for the spouse and
7 for the military member's service and their willingness
8 to continue to serve. Employment's a big one. So,
9 we'll be working very closely with military spouses.
10 I'm very excited about the opportunities we have there.

11 And finally, I am going to move into access to
12 capital and procurement. You can see the colors on the
13 slide. I am going to tell you what it says. As I
14 mentioned, at the end of the fiscal year, we knew it was
15 going to be a great year, fiscal '15. It does turn out
16 that small business lending through SBA products, 7(a)
17 specifically, grew by 80 percent last year to over a
18 billion dollars, almost 1.4 billion.

19 The year prior had been 771 million, a
20 significant increase, and across all dollars, that is
21 due in great part to fee relief that the SBA enacted,
22 absolutely zero borrower fee for veterans, for SBA 7(a)
23 express loans under 350,000, and only half a fee for the
24 borrower on loans above 350,000 within the 7(a) program.

25 This year, we're already on track to keep up

1 that strong growth, and I'm looking forward to giving
2 you an update from the Capital Access Office in March,
3 if you allow that, Chair, please. And then obviously we
4 will be jumping into this in a deeper dive with Ray
5 Milano shortly, later today.

6 At the bottom right is the service-disabled,
7 veteran-owned small business procurement goal for the
8 Federal Government. Confirmed data for '12, '13, '14.
9 And '15, we won't have the results yet until the third
10 quarter of '16, but I'd like you to see how high that
11 number is going. We really are making substantial
12 progress in opportunities for service-disabled vet small
13 business in federal procurement.

14 At the top left, taking a look at counseling and
15 training of -- this is what OVBD's impact is, Office of
16 Veterans Business Development, because I want you to see
17 the difference here, training, where there are multiple
18 people in a session together, learning about small
19 business ownership principles, that's at almost 60,000
20 in fiscal '15. And counseling is one on one, and it's
21 VBOC, Veteran Business Outreach Center, only, was about
22 15,000 and a half. I expect that you are going to see
23 some colors change on this going forward. Yes, I'm very
24 happy about our contribution.

25 You are going to see more training, less

1 counseling from the VBOC for the reasons that Ray
2 described. Their mission really is first to get to the
3 transitioning servicemember population, Reserve, Guard,
4 active-duty. But the color band you are going to see
5 better reflected that they will get credit for is
6 referral, referring them to the right agency.

7 Whether it's SBA or it's VA or it's Department
8 of Labor, they are supposed to be connectors, and until
9 I can grow this program to be able to serve every vet
10 face to face, I'm going to need to have a good referral
11 network, and they need to be connectors, not creating
12 their own new wheels and trying to get people to come
13 and join on that car. That's not going to happen.

14 So, I'm pleased with what we're doing. SBA, as
15 a whole, connects with 200,000 servicemembers, veterans,
16 and military spouses every year. So, this is our share
17 specifically of that pie.

18 That is my really brief, the Office of Veterans
19 Business Development update. Are there any questions
20 for me at this time?

21 MR. MCADAMS: Ms. Carson, Rich McAdams. Thank
22 you very much for that.

23 One quick question, and it's a very broad
24 question. In light of 14 years of -- that's finally
25 winding down, being at war, and the increasing

1 population of service-disabled veterans, is -- are you
2 aware of any move -- any discussion within Congress
3 about increasing the 3 percent goal for
4 service-disabled, veteran-owned small business?

5 MS. CARSON: There has not been discussion of
6 increasing beyond the 3 percent goal at this time. I'm
7 not seeing it in any pending legislation or discussion.

8 MR. MCADAMS: Okay, thank you.

9 MR. PHIPPS: Thank you very much, Barb.

10 Now we will get into the veteran business access
11 to capital landscape, Ray Milano.

12 MR. MILANO: Yeah, let me just scroll through
13 here really quickly, and I'll be ready to go.

14 All right. So, again, this is a pretty
15 confusing slide, so I put it up there for a purpose, but
16 I just want to take the opportunity to kind of introduce
17 myself this time. So, again, Ray Milano, director of
18 the VBOC program.

19 So, I came down to the Office of Veterans
20 Business Development in May of this year. Prior to
21 that, I've been with SBA for about 16 1/2 years up in
22 Boston. So, I've been with the Boston District Office
23 and the New England Regional Office. Pretty much I have
24 held, formally or informally, pretty much every job in
25 the district or the regional office up there, except

1 regional administrator and district director, and I
2 loved my time up there.

3 My last, you know, eight years or so, I was the
4 veteran business development officer up there. So, I
5 worked directly with veterans. My last four or five
6 years, I was the branch manager and the lead economic
7 development person up in Massachusetts. And probably
8 the last three years, I probably spent 80 percent of my
9 time working with veterans and veteran organizations.

10 You know, I talk about the three Es. I know
11 we're the Small Business Administration, but when you
12 talk to veterans, it's about employment, education,
13 entrepreneurship, and, you know, it's either one or a
14 multiple of those three. So, I made it my job to kind
15 of be plugged in, and, you know, it worked well in
16 Massachusetts. I was having a great time up there.

17 You know, we were serving the veteran
18 population, the small business community, and when I saw
19 an opportunity to come down to D.C. and head up the VBOC
20 program, you know, I jumped on it, and it was to work
21 with Barb. I knew about the organization. I knew about
22 the leadership. I knew about the OVBD team. You know,
23 I thought bringing some field perspective,
24 boots-on-the-ground kind of reality to headquarters,
25 wouldn't be a bad thing. And it's worked out great so

1 far.

2 So, I'm looking forward to working with the OVBD
3 team and you and all the committees and everybody that's
4 kind of working to help veterans out there, to kind of,
5 you know, make it work and make it work within the box,
6 so everything's not done out of the box, right? It
7 seems like all the successful programs and resources out
8 there are being done outside of the box and they're
9 one-offs, and we want to try to make sure that, you
10 know, that box is expanded and everybody is kind of
11 inside there and make it happen.

12 So, with that said, you know, prior to SBA --
13 I'm a Marine Corps vet, so I got out of the military,
14 went to undergrad, went to law school, and my first job
15 was with SBA. My first real job everybody tells me was
16 with SBA. So, I have been with SBA ever since. And,
17 again, I've been lucky because I've been challenged,
18 I've been given some opportunities within SBA, I've
19 stayed with SBA, and I think I might be the last one in
20 my generation that retires from the same job they
21 started with, you know, after 30 years.

22 So, I'm happy about that because I love what I
23 do at SBA, I love our mission, and I love the impact,
24 right? If we do our job well -- I tell people, if you
25 do your job well -- you know, forget about the metrics

1 and all that. If you do your job, you do it well, you
2 know, the results are going to be there, and that's kind
3 of the mission I bring. So, that's kind of a background
4 on myself.

5 Now, I ran into Mike, and he was talking about,
6 you know, getting some access to capital brought to the
7 committee, and so I'm not representing the Office of
8 Capital Access, right? You know, so they're going to be
9 here, they'll talk about their programs, the SOPs, the
10 regulations, all that good stuff. I'm kind of bringing
11 a field perspective, how I used to deal with veterans in
12 the field when they said, hey, I need funding, you know,
13 what do I do? And how that happens, what works, what
14 doesn't work, what they should be expecting going
15 forward. So, I'm bringing you that kind of
16 boots-on-the-ground, field perspective on veteran
17 lending.

18 So, again, I'm not going to -- you know, I'm
19 going to go through this, I'm going to talk about
20 programs, et cetera, but, again, Capital Access will be
21 here to talk about their information to do that.

22 So, here's a screen, you know, I found this
23 online, you know, alternative financing, right? There's
24 the landscape right there. So, this isn't traditional
25 lending. This is all that alternative financing out

1 there, and, you know, you'll get this and you can see,
2 you know, where do you start? It's confusing, right?
3 What do you do out there?

4 You know, I can imagine being a startup or an
5 existing business and you don't have that connection,
6 right? You don't know your SBA office. You're not
7 connected with, you know, a lender. You're not
8 connected with a business advisor. You jump online,
9 this is the kind of stuff you find, right? And now
10 you've got to figure out what you do next.

11 So, I talked to Mike and I talked -- we'll talk
12 about some traditional lending, the SBA lending, and
13 then some alternatives, and kind of -- you know, not the
14 good, the bad, and the ugly, but, you know, what you
15 should be thinking about, you know, as a veteran or as a
16 resource for a veteran as they're looking for financing.

17 So, here's some financing resources to kind of
18 break it down a little bit, and, you know, you probably
19 all know about this, you know, you know about these
20 options, and, you know, I've highlighted a few of them,
21 right? So, you have got these online lenders now.
22 Peer-to-peer lending is starting to wane a little bit
23 now with the online lending taking place, you know, and
24 part of that online lending is the short-term lenders,
25 these really short-term lenders, one to six months, one

1 to twelve months. You know, you have some online
2 lenders that go from six months to five years, six
3 months to two years.

4 And then you have crowdfunding. I know some new
5 regulations were just issued as far as crowdfunding for
6 equity purposes. So, it will be interesting to see how
7 that happens, but we do see a lot of interesting
8 crowdfunding. And then in red, I have credit cards,
9 right? So, when I'm in the field and I'm talking to
10 businesses, you know, all of these come up, right? They
11 want to know, where do I start? I've tried this, where
12 to start.

13 You know, I've highlighted credit cards because
14 there are some other options out there better than
15 credit cards, and, you know, when we're talking about
16 financing resources, you know, it's all individual,
17 right? You can't -- it's not -- you can't paint it
18 in -- you know, kind of in a broad brush. Everybody's
19 situation is different, and I'm going to talk about some
20 of those expectations and needs as you walk into, you
21 know, kind of the lending environment.

22 So, as you know, with SBA, especially in the
23 field, we do it all. So, we're working with small
24 business owners, resource partners, but we're also
25 working with lenders, right? So, in the field, we have

1 lender relation specialists that all they do is work
2 with lenders every day and train them on the SBA loan
3 programs, how to use the loan programs, you know, assist
4 them with any questions regarding the SOPs, et cetera.

5 But we also work with lenders to connect them
6 with small business owners, and we work with them to
7 find out what they're looking for, because we do a lot
8 of referrals in the field. You know, a lot of small
9 business owners come through the SBA and our resource
10 partners to get to lenders. They don't go to lenders
11 first, which is great; that's what we want them to do.

12 But, you know, here are the basics, right? And
13 everybody knows the five Cs, but I break it down
14 differently, right? So, I say, you know, credit score,
15 right? You need to know your credit score. If you
16 don't know your credit score before you walk into a
17 lender, you know, you are not being given the right
18 information. So, you need to know your credit score.

19 You know, what the credit score is -- you know,
20 if you're in the 670, 680 range and above and you walk
21 into a lender, you know, you're in the ballpark. I like
22 to say you're going to get into the ballpark. If you're
23 below that, they're going to meet you at the door and
24 kind of, you know, talk to you before they let you in,
25 right?

1 So, 670, 680, that's about the range where, you
2 know, you're in the ballpark, they are going to talk to
3 you. You know, community banks are, you know, are what
4 are getting it done right now. You know, I'll put down
5 some numbers. I know Barb talked about the numbers, but
6 veteran loans, 2014, loans to veterans through SBA, 2126
7 loans, right, for about \$605 million, 2014, to veterans.
8 These are 7(a) loans.

9 In 2015, the loans went up to 3354 -- that's a
10 45 percent increase -- and the total dollars went up 100
11 percent, to over \$1.2 billion to veterans. So, the
12 lending's out there, right? Lenders want to lend, but
13 they want to lend to qualified borrowers that have the
14 right expectations, that know what they're getting into.
15 So, credit score is important.

16 Injection, skin in the game, contribution,
17 that's important, right? So, you need to know that, you
18 know, a lender is not going to finance you 100 percent.
19 You know, if your business plan says you need \$100,000
20 to make things work, to get it up and running, start
21 making a profit, all that good stuff, you know, they're
22 not going to finance you 100 percent, especially if
23 you're a startup. So, we tell people, you need about 20
24 percent injection. You know, 20 percent is the
25 ballpark.

1 There is no set rule on the SBA side for
2 injection, you know, there's no set, you know, 20
3 percent, 10 percent, 30 percent, but a lender is going
4 to want to see injection, skin in the game, especially
5 if you're a startup.

6 If you're an existing business, you know, a
7 business that has some history, good cash flow, and
8 depending on what you need the money for, you know, you
9 might not have any injection, right? The lender might
10 feel like you're a good risk, you don't need the
11 injection, the cash flow's going to pay for itself,
12 you're already invested in your business, and so, you
13 know, we don't need any additional injection on that.
14 We already have that.

15 But most of the ones we see are -- you know,
16 between startup and two or three years that need this
17 funding, and most banks are going to ask for injection,
18 and 20 percent is a good rule we find out there. Some,
19 you know, it's as low as 10, some it's up to 30, but
20 setting those expectations with that borrower from the
21 beginning is important when they walk in.

22 Collateral is important. So, they need to
23 understand, you know, it is your house, you know, any
24 real estate, your car, all business assets, but
25 something like life insurance, right? So, a lender

1 might ask for life insurance for the term of the loan.
2 That's something a lot of people don't think about, and
3 you want to know that before you walk into a lender,
4 because, you know, you're sitting there and then a
5 lender starts asking you about life insurance. If
6 you're not ready for it, it's kind of offputting for
7 some people, right? So, you need to know about life
8 insurance as far as collateral and all types of
9 collateral and be ready to do that.

10 And then the final thing is experience, right?
11 So, experience for you or your team, right? So, a lot
12 of business owners, you know, short-sell themselves and
13 their team in their business plan. You know, they don't
14 talk about their experience, the experience of their
15 team. And when I talk about team, I'm talking about
16 formal team members, employees, your accountant, your
17 lawyer, et cetera, and a lot of startups don't have
18 formal, you know, team members like that, but it's your
19 informal team, too.

20 So, if your wife is going to be your accountant,
21 you know, a lot of them don't talk about that in their
22 business plan, but they need to know that. The bank
23 wants to know that you and your team, number one, have
24 the ability to do the work. So, if you're going to be a
25 plumber, who's going to do the work, right? Who has the

1 experience as a plumber? But number two, who has
2 experience running a business and managing a business?
3 So, you need to show that, too. So, those are two
4 separate characteristics that the bank is going to look
5 for.

6 So, when I talk to borrowers and when I'm
7 talking with the lenders, I kind of break it down that
8 way, and it usually works out pretty well. The one
9 thing I see, you know, that they're really short on is
10 telling about their story, their experience, you know,
11 the experience of their team. You know,
12 entrepreneurship is a team sport, right? And you need a
13 team to make a business run, and you need a team to help
14 you get down the road, and telling about yourself and
15 your team is a big deal to the lender, okay?

16 And then it ties right into a loan declined.
17 So, this is what I talk to lenders all the time about,
18 right? So, in the field, you know, they'll say, no
19 business plan, no financials, bad credit, lack of
20 experience, little or no investment/contribution into
21 the business, no earnings history, right, no
22 projections, no cash flow, and then your lack of
23 commitment. So, this sounds a little corny, but bottom
24 line is -- and as probably most of you know -- is a
25 lender is going to sit across from you, and they are

1 going to push aside the business plan and kind of look
2 you in the eye and say, okay, you know, tell me why I
3 should lend to you, you know? I understand what's in
4 the business plan, but you tell me, you know, why I'm
5 going to lend to you.

6 You need to let that lender know that and they
7 need to feel that, you know, whether you're making 5
8 cents a day or \$5 million a day, that you're going to
9 get up every day and be passionate and run that business
10 and that you're going to pay that lender back every
11 month for those seven years or ten years.

12 And the bottom line is, lenders want to lend and
13 they want to see you pay off that loan, right? They
14 want to see that loan payment seven years from now. So,
15 you know, getting them to the point where, you know,
16 they can believe you and do that is important.

17 And the reason I'm going through this is, you
18 know, setting those expectations is really important.
19 You know, we're going to talk about the loan programs,
20 but remember, the loan programs are set up for lenders,
21 not for borrowers, meaning it's SBA's job to create loan
22 programs that lenders will use to lend to small
23 businesses. So, our loan programs are focused on
24 lenders really, not borrowers, and the borrowers just
25 need to be -- have the right expectations and be set up

1 for success. That's done through technical assistance.

2 So, if the borrowers are getting to the right
3 people, to the right organizations, the right business
4 advisors from the beginning, the loan programs are going
5 to be there for them to utilize. The loan programs
6 aren't set up to make it easy for borrowers. They're
7 there to make it easy for lenders to lend, to mitigate
8 their risk.

9 And a lot of borrowers don't think of it that
10 way, especially in the veteran community, because, you
11 know, we used to have Patriot Express, right? And when
12 Patriot Express went away, you know, it was a sad day,
13 because Patriot Express was the only loan program that
14 people used to walk into my office and say, "I want a
15 Patriot Express loan," because it was well publicized,
16 it was a great loan program, it was well marketed, and
17 people wanted it. People wanted that loan.

18 And a lot of times I had to say, well, don't --
19 you know, the bottom line is it doesn't matter what loan
20 program the lender uses. If they're willing to lend you
21 money, you take the money, and they're going to find a
22 loan program that works for you and works for them. It
23 might be the one you think about, but it might not, and
24 it might be for a whole host of reasons. You know, so
25 that's key. Remember, these loan programs are focused

1 on lenders, not borrowers, right? And borrowers just
2 need to be set up for success in the system, okay?

3 So, obviously, you know, on the 7(a) side, you
4 know, we have the 7(a) loan program, and this is our
5 most used program, you know, up to \$5 million, you know,
6 85 percent guarantee for loans 150 or less, 75 percent
7 guarantee for loans over 150 up to 5 million, okay?
8 This is our general loan program.

9 And, you know, I guess before -- really, before
10 I go into the SBA loan programs, you know, borrowers
11 should always start, you know, with a traditional bank
12 loan, right? Walk in to your lender, you know, I'm in
13 the community, I'm looking for a loan, and let a lender
14 make a decision on, you know, hey, we're going to do it
15 traditionally, you're a good risk for us, we don't need
16 to mitigate the risk, you know, let's make it happen,
17 right? It starts at the kind of highest common
18 denominator, so to speak, and then you go down from
19 there.

20 You don't really start at the lowest level
21 where -- you know, you don't start with online loans,
22 you don't start with, you know, short-term loans, you
23 don't start with your credit card. You know, what we
24 tell borrowers is let's see where you are, you know,
25 let's talk to a business advisor, let you get your

1 business plan ready. Let's get your financials ready
2 and see if you're ready to -- for -- if you're
3 lender-ready and make that determination.

4 If you are lender-ready, the bank's going to
5 give you the loan. Remember, the bank cannot use the
6 SBA guaranteed loan program if they would make the loan
7 traditionally, right? They have to say, but for the SBA
8 guarantee, we would not make this loan. That's what it
9 means, right? So, these 63,000 7(a) loans, you know,
10 these are banks saying, without the SBA guarantee, we
11 would not make these loans. These loans would not be
12 made without the SBA guarantee. So, the banks certify
13 that.

14 So, the first level is, hey, is the bank going
15 to make this loan traditionally? And the bank might
16 say, no, you know, you're a startup, we don't do a lot
17 of startups, you know, this is an industry we really
18 don't do a lot of -- you know, your credit score is
19 borderline, your collateral's not great. So, they might
20 say, okay, we need to mitigate that risk. So, that's
21 where the SBA guarantee comes in, right? It's not to
22 make bad loans good; it's to make those borderline
23 loans -- it makes the lender get to yes, right, to
24 mitigate that risk just enough to make that happen. We
25 do that by the SBA guarantee, right?

1 So, for loans, again, under 150, it's an 85
2 percent guarantee. Lenders love that, right? Why not
3 get an 85 percent guarantee, you know, to mitigate that
4 risk? For loans up to 5 million, you know, from 150 to
5 5 million, it's a 75 percent guarantee. A great
6 program. So, you've got to kind of think of it in those
7 terms.

8 And I always -- when I talk to a borrower, it's
9 not start with these microloans and payday loans and
10 short-term loans. Start with a lender and see where you
11 are with the lender first and then work your way down,
12 right? Work your way down to the lowest common
13 denominator and see what's available for you, okay?

14 Now, the other, you know, main SBA loan program
15 is the 504. So, this is, you know, long-term equipment,
16 real estate, some development, up to 5.5 million. To be
17 honest, the 504 program has been going down the last
18 couple of years. You know, a lot of times it's because
19 the lenders are using the 7(a) loan program, you know,
20 instead of the 504, but this is a well-used program, and
21 it is an option, okay?

22 If you're not familiar with the 504 program, you
23 know, it's a three-way project. You have a lender that
24 covers 50 percent, so it's a no-brainer for a lender.
25 You get into a piece of property, the lender's in it at

1 a first mortgage at -- you know, at 50 percent. They
2 love that. And then SBA comes in with a certified
3 development company up to 40 percent. And then usually
4 the business is in for 10 percent. So, this is average.

5 You know, if it's a startup, you're going to add
6 another 5 percent on that injection from the company, so
7 it will be 15 percent, and the CDC will cover 35
8 percent. You know, if it's a special use, like a gas
9 station or a golf course or something like that, you
10 know, again, the injection from the company would go up,
11 but this is an average SBA 504 loan, and it's a great
12 program.

13 Again, lenders know about this program and,
14 again, this is -- these are for lenders to use. So, you
15 know if somebody is looking to buy a building or
16 retrofit a building, you know, it's always let's talk to
17 a CDC or a lender and see what works best for you.
18 What's your best situation, right? You know, if you
19 don't have the injection, maybe the 504 is the way to
20 go, but, you know, they could -- you know, banks could
21 use the 7(a) loan program to cover, you know, real
22 estate, too. So, whatever works best for the lender and
23 for the borrower. So, setting those expectations from
24 the beginning is important.

25 And then knowing the lender, too. So, on the

1 SBA side, again, we work with the lenders every day. I
2 know which lenders are doing the most startup loans, the
3 most low-dollar loans, the most loans to veterans, the
4 most loans to women, the most loans to minorities, the
5 most loans to -- you name the industry or you name the
6 franchise, I can pull it up in five minutes.

7 So, instead of giving you, you know, a list of,
8 you know, 140 lenders in Massachusetts who did loans
9 last year under the SBA guarantee, I can break it down
10 to seven or ten lenders that are going to give you your
11 best shot. You're a veteran, you're a startup, you're
12 in this industry, you know, you're looking for this
13 amount, here are the lenders that hit the sweet spot for
14 that. These are the ones you need to talk to.

15 So, we could do that every day. Every district
16 office from SBA could do that. We provide the
17 information to all our resource partners, so every
18 resource partner has access to that information, every
19 veteran service organization that needs that
20 information. It's all about relationships, right, and
21 we can pull that information pretty quick.

22 So, you know, it's providing that service to the
23 borrower, saying, hey, you know, let's set those
24 expectations, let's give you your best shot of making it
25 happen and doing it that way, okay? And, you know, when

1 I talk about that, a lot of people say, wow, that's like
2 a secret, and it's not a secret, right? We do it every
3 day in a district office, and it's just about connecting
4 with the right people in your area.

5 So, here -- so, we do have special loan programs
6 for veterans, right? So, we have Veterans Advantage
7 now, which took over for Patriot Express, and then we
8 have the Veterans Entrepreneurship Act of 2015 that took
9 charge -- took over October 1st. So, this is
10 legislation, right?

11 The Veterans Entrepreneurship Act of 2015, this
12 was legislation passed by Congress, signed by the
13 President, and, you know, for all SBA Express loans,
14 right, there's no guarantee fee charged to veterans and
15 their spouses. So, all SBA Express loans.

16 So, SBA Express is a subset of the 7(a) loan
17 program. SBA Express only goes up to a 50 percent
18 guarantee and only goes up to 350,000. So, SBA Express
19 loans, 50 percent guarantee, up to 350,000, no guarantee
20 fee, which is great, right? So, that's great for, you
21 know, the borrower, you know, if they have to pay a 3
22 percent guarantee fee on, you know, \$350,000, you know,
23 that could add up, right?

24 So, you know, that eliminates that, so it helps
25 the borrower, obviously, because of the injection at the

1 beginning for that, but it also helps the lender because
2 that money that the borrower would use for the guarantee
3 fee, they can now put into the business, and the lender
4 loves that, right? That's injection for the lender.

5 So, again, this is a program that looks like
6 it's targeted towards veterans, and it is, but it helps
7 the lender, too, because that money you would pay for
8 the guarantee fee is going to be put into the business
9 instead of in the pocket of the bank. And the bank
10 doesn't mind, you know, they like that, right? That
11 helps the lender. It mitigates some risk. So, that's a
12 good thing. Okay, that's the Veterans Entrepreneurship
13 Act.

14 Veterans Advantage now -- so, before the
15 Veterans Entrepreneurship Act, you know, that was what I
16 just talked about, was Veterans Advantage, and, you
17 know, part of Veterans Advantage was kind of eaten up by
18 the Veterans Entrepreneurship Act, which is good because
19 now it's legislation and it's forever, right? It
20 doesn't have to be renewed every year.

21 So, now the Veterans Entrepreneurship Act -- so,
22 loans from 350,000, right, up to 5 million done to
23 veterans, the guarantee fee is cut in half, okay? And
24 Veterans Advantage runs through September 30th, 2016,
25 okay? And those are the specials for veterans.

1 All loans right now, for any borrower up to 150,
2 has no guarantee fee, right, under SBA. So, that's for
3 everybody. And these -- this eligibility right here is
4 a specific just for the veterans, so veterans have a
5 good deal, up to 350,000 for Patriot Express -- I mean
6 for SBA Express, no guarantee fee; and then 50 percent,
7 half guarantee fee up to 5 million for all those loan
8 programs, okay?

9 I want to talk to you about the Community
10 Advantage Loan Program, okay? This is a program under
11 the SBA umbrella. It's a pilot loan program that's been
12 around for a few years. Technically, it's set to
13 expire, I think, at the end of this year, but there is a
14 rumor that it's going to be extended. I don't think
15 they're too worried about that.

16 They're in the process of kind of trying to
17 certify as many Community Advantage lenders out there.
18 Community Advantage is pretty much the 7(a) program for
19 nonprofits, so a microlender, okay? So, it pretty much
20 runs the rules of the 7(a), it goes up to 250,000, the
21 guarantee fee is similar to 7(a), you know, 85 percent
22 for loans 150 and less, 75 percent for loans, you know,
23 150 to 250. You know, it's a quicker loan program
24 because it's not done by a traditional lender.

25 It's a little more flexible with the credit

1 scoring side, because, again, they're not regulated like
2 a lender, so they can make loan decisions, don't have to
3 worry about regulators coming in and questioning what
4 they're doing.

5 This is a loan program focused on underserved
6 markets. So, 60 percent of loans done under the
7 Community Advantage program by an organization have to
8 be done to underserved markets. So, that's women,
9 minorities, and veterans, right? So, when you hear
10 "underserved," always think veteran. You know, a lot of
11 people talk about women, minority, HUBZone. Think about
12 veteran, underserved, right? Community Advantage is
13 perfect.

14 So, if you're not -- if a traditional, you know,
15 SBA loan -- traditional bank loan doesn't work, a
16 traditional SBA loan doesn't work, maybe a Community
17 Advantage loan is the next step. See, I'm kind of
18 tiering it down, starting from the top and walking down
19 the process, because that's what you want to do. Your
20 best shot and -- you know, for you, as far as the best
21 benefit for you, the best assistance for you in managing
22 that loan, and the best interest rate for you is
23 starting from the top and walking it down, because if
24 you're a good borrower, you are going to get the best
25 rate, and walk it down from there. A lot of people try

1 to start from the bottom, right? And that's really not
2 the right way to go. It's really starting at the top
3 and seeing what fits for you, okay?

4 And then, you know, under -- after Community
5 Advantage, then it's microloans. So, these -- again,
6 nonprofits, community-based organizations, and loans up
7 to 50,000 for existing businesses, up to 30,000 for
8 startups. You know, the interest rate is a little
9 higher with microloans, you know, somewhere between 5
10 and 12 percent, but, again, these are community-based
11 organizations looking to start and grow businesses
12 within a geographic-specific area, right? So,
13 microloans are great. That could be an option if you're
14 looking -- if that covers you.

15 You know, you know that any lender is not going
16 to lend you -- you know, if you need \$100,000 to start
17 and grow your business, you know, and that's the number,
18 you know, the lender is not going to undercapitalize you
19 and give you 50,000, right? You know, if you need a
20 hundred thousand, you need a hundred thousand, and the
21 bank's not going to say, well, you know, you're not
22 eligible for a hundred, but we'll give you 50 and see
23 what happens. That's never going to happen, right?

24 So, people think, well, I'll just get a
25 microloan for, you know, half of what I need and then

1 we'll see what happens. Well, that's not going to
2 happen, right? And that's setting those expectations
3 for those borrowers, because to be honest, a lot of
4 borrowers just walk right in to a lender or walk right
5 in to a microlender, et cetera, or they find their own
6 path, and, you know, they get discouraged, feel like
7 they can never get a traditional loan or an SBA loan,
8 and then -- you know, we'll talk about it -- they go to
9 those online lenders or those, you know, payday lenders
10 or their credit cards.

11 And usually if they're not ready or they don't
12 understand what they need to get an SBA loan or a
13 traditional loan, they are not ready for those other
14 loans either, and they are just going to set themselves
15 up for failure. And then we are going to hear from them
16 about six months later saying, hey, now I'm in deep,
17 right? Now I owe my credit card company.

18 So, again, SBA is in the business of creating
19 loan programs to get lenders to lend, and, you know, we
20 talk to lenders, they talk to us, and we try to make
21 this happen. So, the CAPLine programs, a working line
22 of credit -- you know, we have a contract line of
23 credit, we have a seasonal line of credit, builder's
24 lines of credit, and working capital lines of credit.
25 You know, these are underutilized programs. I know that

1 a lot of businesses you work with do federal or state
2 contracting. Contract lines of credit, a great program,
3 but only if you're working with a lender that uses that
4 program.

5 A lot of lenders don't use their CAPLines
6 program because it just doesn't fit their business
7 model, right, but a lot of them do, and that's where you
8 could talk to your local district office and say, hey,
9 who's using the CAPLine program? Which lender should I
10 talk to? I have a contract in hand. I need, you know,
11 \$300,000 to complete this contract. I need to buy
12 inventory. I need to hire some people. I need to get
13 insurance. I need to pay for some travel. You know,
14 who is going to give me credit or who's going to give me
15 a loan based on this contract? Not everybody. You need
16 to find the right lender, and that's where the SBA can
17 help you do that.

18 Export, Community Advantage, we talked about,
19 disaster, the SBIC program, you know, and then surety
20 bonding. So, again, there's a lot of programs out there
21 on the SBA side that we could help you with, and
22 starting with your lender and working your way down is
23 the best way to do that. But the biggest mistake I see
24 with lending in the field is that the borrowers don't
25 find the technical assistance prior to getting the loan.

1 So, they don't know what to expect. They don't
2 understand what the lender's looking for. They don't
3 understand, you know, the credit score and, you know,
4 how the SBA guarantee works. They don't understand how
5 the loan programs work, and they don't understand all
6 their options, right?

7 When I talk to borrowers, I talk about you want
8 to leverage the resources you have in the best way
9 available, right? So, some -- you know, people start up
10 their business, they have \$75,000 in the bank, their
11 business plan says they need 50,000 or 60 to start the
12 business, they don't want debt, so they go ahead and
13 dump it all into their business and they move forward,
14 and, you know, hopefully it works out. A lot of times
15 it doesn't. Eventually, they are going to need capital
16 anyways.

17 You know, most people don't start off at 50, 60
18 thousand and then grow and then they never need capital.
19 Most of them are going to need debt financing. So, I
20 talk to them and say, well, you know, if you need
21 \$50,000, you know, you might want to talk to a bank, and
22 you might have the cash flow to pay for it, because, you
23 know, if you're looking at 10 percent, you know, at
24 \$50,000, you are going to have to put 10,000 into your
25 business, which you have already, and instead of putting

1 50 or 60 in, you're putting 10 in, 10 now, and now you
2 still have 40 or 50 in your pocket, and now you're
3 paying 200, 500 dollars a month for that 50,000, but now
4 you can grow, right?

5 Maybe they'll give you a line of credit, you
6 know, that can expand your business. So, knowing your
7 options from the beginning is the most important, and
8 the ones that are successful are the ones that know --
9 you know, talk to a technical assistance provider, you
10 know, even talk to your lender ahead of the game. You
11 know, the lender is part of your team.

12 We have a lot of business owners that I say,
13 hey, you're new to the area. You're thinking about
14 starting a business. You know you want to do business
15 with this bank. You're not lender-ready now, but go
16 talk to that lender. You know, we will give you the SBA
17 person, say, hey, I'm new to the community. Here's my
18 business plan now. You know, if I came in for a loan
19 today, what would you tell me and what would I need down
20 the road?

21 So, make that relationship from the beginning,
22 so when you are ready for a loan and you're ready to
23 walk in, you know, they already know you, and you've
24 already kind of done what they said, so it's more
25 familiar to them, right? They're a partner with you.

1 So, think of a lender as your partner.

2 A lot of people think of lenders as adversaries.
3 We used to get calls all the time. Hey, Ray, you know,
4 I just missed my payment. I don't think I can make it.
5 I just lost this contract. What do I do? And the first
6 thing I say is, did you call your lender? They say, no,
7 I didn't call my -- I say, you call your lender.

8 You know, that's one of the other advantages
9 under the SBA program, is the lenders have a lot of
10 flexibility with repayment, right? So, if you had a
11 contract, you lose a contract, the bank could say --
12 whether it's a, you know, traditional lender, a
13 microlender, a Community Advantage lender, they could
14 say, okay, we understand where you're at. We'll defer
15 payment -- principal, interest, or both -- for six
16 months. We'll re-amortize, revisit, and let's get some
17 technical assistance, let's get you back on your feet
18 and see what happens.

19 Well, they can do that. You know, if you have
20 a -- if you put it all on your credit card, a credit
21 card company's not going to do that for you, right? A
22 lot of these payday, you know, loans or these online
23 lenders aren't going to do that for you. So, I'm not
24 saying, you know, that there's not a need for, you know,
25 these payday or online or short-term lenders, because

1 there obviously is, right? There's an increase in them,
2 there's a demand there, but if you're looking to save
3 money, if you're looking to get the best interest rate,
4 and you're looking to save a lot of heartache sometimes,
5 you know, starting at the top is the best way.

6 The way you do that is get technical assistance
7 from the beginning, right? Get those expectations, meet
8 with some lenders, and kind of go down the pyramid like
9 we just did, right? Traditional bank loan? No. Oh,
10 SBA guarantee? No. Community Advantage, microloan?
11 Okay, still you can't get any -- and usually it's due to
12 bad credit, right? That's usually the biggest thing.

13 If you have bad credit and you're determined to
14 start a business and you're going to -- you put it on
15 your credit card or do, you know, an online lender, you
16 know, we are not going to stop people from doing that,
17 and a lot of those work out, but, you know, look at your
18 options first. The people who do that are usually the
19 most successful and do that.

20 I'm not mentioning any of those online or payday
21 or short-term lenders obviously by name, but, you know,
22 they're all good and bad, right, depending on, you know,
23 where that small business is, and a lot of them don't do
24 startups. A lot of them, you still need one or two
25 years in business to get there. So, startups still need

1 to know where to start, and most of them start with
2 their credit card, and, you know, we try to get them as
3 far away as possible from them.

4 If they do start with their credit card, one of
5 the best things about the SBA 7(a) program is we could
6 use an SBA loan to refinance your credit card and pay
7 off your debt -- your credit card, your business credit
8 card. A lot of people don't know that. So, that's one
9 great reason just to go to -- you know, go to a lender
10 and see if you could pay off your credit card and move
11 into either a traditional or an SBA guaranteed loan.
12 So, a lot of people don't know that.

13 So, it's a lot about information transfer and
14 getting to the right people before they walk into that
15 lender. Again, it's all local. Your local district
16 office, your local resource partners, the VBOC, the
17 Small Business Development Centers, SCORE, the Women's
18 Business -- you name them, they all know that, they all
19 have relationships with lenders, know how to get you
20 lender-ready, and that's what we do. So, I hope that
21 helps a little bit.

22 You know, I know the Office of Capital Access is
23 going to come down and talk to you more, and they'll
24 talk to you more about why they institute certain loan
25 programs and why -- you know, why Patriot Express went

1 away, right? You know, how come lenders -- you know,
2 Veterans Advantage doesn't have -- go up to 500,000 or a
3 million, and how come, you know, it doesn't have a
4 higher guarantee percentage and stuff like that, and
5 they could talk to you about the subsidy rate and why
6 they make decisions, but, you know, boots on the ground,
7 why decisions are made by lenders on the ground, it goes
8 back to what Barb was saying.

9 We can make all the policies in the world on a
10 national level, but -- and especially with lending. You
11 know, we work with a lot of lenders who want to have
12 national programs and do more work with veterans, et
13 cetera, but you know what, it's those loan officers in
14 your communities that make those decisions, and if
15 they're not on board, those loans aren't going to get
16 made. So, you need to have those local relationships.

17 And I used to get calls all the time from
18 lenders saying, hey, we're looking for more veterans to
19 lend to, or, hey, no more startups, we just had a couple
20 of defaults, or, hey, no more restaurants, we just had a
21 default with a restaurant, they're not approving any
22 more restaurants. That's the type of relationship that
23 the SBA and our resource partners have with the lending
24 community. So, take advantage of that. You know,
25 that's what we're here for. We work for you. The banks

1 work for you. You know, we're here to make it happen.

2 So, I hope that helps. I think -- you know,
3 that's just my information. Obviously, that will be
4 around. You can get my card. Definitely utilize me as
5 a resource. We have Jerry on board now, so Jerry's
6 going to get up to speed pretty quick on access to
7 capital, and he'll be plugged in with the policies and
8 procedures on, you know, what's being done for veteran
9 lending, how to help it, how to -- you know, what's
10 happening with it.

11 But definitely use me as a resource. I'm
12 fighting hard to keep one foot kind of in the field and
13 one foot in headquarters, and, you know, I look to be a
14 resource for everybody.

15 So, I'll take any questions if you have them.

16 MR. PHIPPS: You had mentioned people are using
17 the 7(a) loan instead of the 504 more. Is there a
18 reason -- do you have any reason for that?

19 MR. MILANO: Well, it's -- yeah, it's -- I mean,
20 it's a lender decision. You know, the 504 program, you
21 know, there's a few more steps for a lender. Some
22 lenders don't have good relationships with certified
23 development companies. So, you know, when somebody
24 comes to me and says, hey, I'm an existing business, I
25 am leasing now, I'm looking to purchase a building, you

1 know, it's attractive to me because of 504, you know, on
2 the CDC side, the rates are, you know, around 4 percent
3 right now for commercial over 20 years, and that's a
4 fixed rate, and then the bank's going to give you a
5 similar rate.

6 So, what I usually do is put them in touch with
7 the CDC. If you start with a certified development
8 company, they could usually pretty much easily find a
9 bank to come in on that project. At 50 percent, first
10 mortgage, it's a no-brainer usually for them. If you
11 start with a lender, the lender, depending on their
12 relationship with the certified development company,
13 might decide, you know, it's -- it's, you know, low-risk
14 enough just to deal with a 7(a) in-house and get a, you
15 know, 75 percent guarantee instead of involving a CDC.
16 So, it's a lender decision just depending on how much --
17 you know, some lenders do a lot of 504 loans. Some
18 don't. So, it just depends on where you start.

19 MR. PHIPPS: Right.

20 MR. MILANO: And the 504 used to have -- you
21 used to be able to refinance under the 504 program.
22 There was a small window of time, and they're trying to
23 get that back. So, the 504 program peaked when they had
24 that refinancing authority in there, and the lenders and
25 NADCO, their national association, is fighting to get

1 that back right now, and I know that's on the Hill.

2 But if that comes back, you are going to see
3 504s go back up, because then you could refinance your
4 504, and if you have money left over, money in the
5 building, you could take that money out and actually put
6 it into your business. So, it's pretty attractive,
7 so...

8 MR. PHIPPS: You mentioned that there were more
9 steps in the 504. What's -- how long does the process
10 take to complete the loan cycle for a 504 versus a 7(a)?

11 MR. MILANO: Yeah, that's a good -- a great
12 question. So, the 7(a) -- it all depends on the
13 paperwork, right? So, if you have your expectations
14 set, you've gone to a business advisor, your business
15 plan's good, you meet with a lender, all your ducks are
16 in a row, I mean, you could get a 7(a) loan -- it's all
17 electronic now, right? So, all -- it's all e-tran, so a
18 lender could go into a system, enter the loan, and get a
19 loan number instantaneously, and then it all depends on
20 the documentation.

21 Preferred SBA lenders do everything in-house.
22 They make all the decisions. SBA doesn't approve the
23 loans. So, they do it all in-house. So, if all the
24 documentation there -- it's all based on, you know, the
25 internal lender process. So, you could get a 7(a) loan

1 in a week, you know, and that -- again, that depends on
2 the borrower and, you know, the system of the lender.
3 So, you could get pretty quick 7(a) loans.

4 MR. PHIPPS: That is quick.

5 MR. MILANO: We just met with a lender -- a
6 national lender that does a quick, you know, kind of
7 7(a) loan. They use some packagers to package the loan,
8 so by the time it gets to the lender, it's already
9 packaged, and they turn it around in three days, you
10 know, approved loans. So, it can be done pretty quick.

11 So, 504 loans are a little tougher, because
12 you're dealing with either, you know, long-term use
13 equipment but usually property, and when you're dealing
14 with property, you're dealing with environmental, s,
15 right, and a building and stuff. So, you know, the 504
16 loans could take six months to a year, and it's only --
17 you know, if you're building a building, you're not
18 getting all the money at once; you're doing it in
19 stages, et cetera. So, it depends upon the type of loan
20 you're getting.

21 But if you need a traditional 7(a) and your
22 ducks are in a row, you went through a packager, you
23 know, a bank can turn that around in days the way the
24 system is set up now. It's almost all forced
25 electronic. You probably know about the scoring system

1 now used by SBA, and that's being used to give
2 lenders -- allay their fears. You know, SBA is saying,
3 hey, you know, using our scoring system, if it's 140 or
4 above, using our tool, we're saying there's a good
5 chance that's going to be a successful business, you
6 know, it's going to get paid back, and that's using ten
7 years of loan data, and that's -- I'm getting into
8 Capital Access stuff, but -- so, we're trying to make it
9 as easy as possible for lenders to make that decision,
10 and our credit scoring tool does that. But it's all --
11 mostly all electronic right now.

12 MR. PHIPPS: Excellent.

13 You mentioned the information about what banks
14 are lending to what types of organizations. Is that
15 something for veteran businesses, in general, not having
16 to go in just -- we can't have everybody go talk to Ray.
17 Is any of that information made publicly available
18 periodically or is that something -- how does --

19 MR. MILANO: It's usually done -- I haven't seen
20 it published, you know -- you know, without request,
21 meaning, you know, your local district office, your
22 local veteran business development officer, your local
23 lender relations specialist, your local district
24 director. Just say, hey, we'd love to see this
25 information on a monthly or quarterly basis, and they

1 could break it out.

2 You're not going to have any PII information.
3 It's going to say, you know, this lender, this amount of
4 loans, to this industry, to this demographic, veteran,
5 startup, you know, it's all just general information,
6 and it's there. It's there. It takes, you know, a
7 district office five minutes to pull that up, and I did
8 that for every borrower. I never referred to a bank. I
9 always did that process.

10 So, you're narrowing it down, right, because,
11 you know, like I said, in Massachusetts, we had over 140
12 lenders use the SBA guarantee loan programs last year.
13 So, that's a lot of lenders. So, how do you break that
14 down? Some, you know, do a lot of loans, some do
15 onesies-twosies, but, you know, that onesy-twoisy in your
16 community might be the one to go to, right, because you
17 might already have a relationship with them.

18 So, if we could set them up so they understand
19 the program as a lender and then set you up to get
20 through the hoops, you know, we could make that happen.

21 MR. PHIPPS: How does this all interact with the
22 new SBA LINC's tool?

23 MR. MILANO: So, SBA LINC, a new tool. How many
24 people know about SBA LINC? So, it's kind of like
25 Lending Tree, right, for the SBA. So, it's great. I

1 don't know if all lenders are on it yet. It's been a
2 phased approach. But SBA LINC, you could go in and put
3 information about yourself, your needs, your industry,
4 and then you'll get hooked up with certain lenders that
5 kind of want to do business with you, and then you'll
6 get an email.

7 So, you'll get an email from a lender saying,
8 hey, got contacted by LINC, we're interested, you know,
9 we'd like to set up a time for a call or maybe to come
10 in. So, SBA LINC is great. It's great for -- it's a
11 good service, because a lot of people want to be more
12 online these days, right? And that's -- you know, one
13 of the attractions for these online lending platforms is
14 that people just don't want to walk in and talk to a
15 lender. They don't want to be turned down. They just
16 don't want to talk to somebody. They would rather just
17 get approved or unapproved online, you know, boom, go
18 forward.

19 You know, if I get 6 percent, you know, great.
20 If I get 35 percent, it's worth it, because I didn't
21 have to go talk to a lender. And some people think that
22 way. They'd rather do everything online or on their
23 computer. They don't want to deal with anybody and go
24 through the process. That's why I -- you know, to be
25 honest, that's why a lot of these online lenders are

1 doing well, because people just don't want to make the
2 effort to get the information and make the contacts and
3 go in and, you know, possibly get turned down by a
4 lender.

5 Well, you know what, that's part of the process,
6 right? And if you can't handle that as a business
7 owner, well, you know, what are your odds of succeeding,
8 right? You know, so that's the way I look at it. So --
9 but that's -- but, so, LINC is a process, because we
10 understand as a federal agency we need that online tool,
11 right? They don't want to talk to their district
12 office, you know, they don't want to talk to a resource
13 partner. They'd rather just go online and have somebody
14 contact them. So, SBA has set up LINC to do that.

15 MR. PHIPPS: So, it doesn't interact with the
16 7(a) or the -- does it interact with the 7(a) loan
17 program tool or will it eventually?

18 MR. MILANO: It interacts with all the lenders
19 that are signed up to be on LINC.

20 MR. PHIPPS: So, later, down the process, it
21 might link up with others, too?

22 MR. MILANO: Yeah, they might -- so, these are
23 people through -- that are, you know, authorized under
24 the SBA loan programs to do SBA loans. They might
25 decide not to go the SBA route, you know, you might be a

1 great risk, so they might not do it that way.

2 MR. PHIPPS: Right.

3 MR. MILANO: Yes?

4 MR. GARCIA: Ray, I agree with you, technical
5 assistance is extremely important. Culturally, we are
6 also taught to pay our debts, stay out of debt, which it
7 seems like we wait until the last minute to go after a
8 loan to get out of debt. So, technical assistance, this
9 information, it's extremely important to get, when is
10 the best time to seek a loan.

11 The question I have is regarding franchise
12 opportunities. How does that play into a franchise? Do
13 franchisers look to that veteran to secure a loan to be
14 able to buy his franchise, go into a franchise? Is
15 there a loan program for franchisees? Is there anything
16 like that?

17 MR. MILANO: So, all our loan programs could be
18 used for franchises.

19 MR. GARCIA: Okay.

20 MR. MILANO: So, SBA has what we call a
21 franchise registry -- I don't know if people have heard
22 of that -- and so SBA actually, through the IFA, you
23 know, the International Franchise Association, you know,
24 they actually go through franchise documents and kind of
25 give them the checkmark of approval, which is great on

1 the lending side, because if a lender goes into the
2 franchise registry and sees that your franchise
3 agreement, your specific one, says -- many franchises,
4 you know, have many, you know, franchise agreements.
5 So, if it's -- if the one you're looking at is certified
6 by the SBA or IFA through the franchise registry, the
7 lender doesn't have to go through and certify it. We've
8 already kind of checked it off and said it's a true
9 franchise, it meets all the regulations for the SBA
10 guarantee program.

11 So, the 7(a) loan program can be used for
12 franchises, the microloan, the Community Advantage loan,
13 you know, all them can be used for franchises. 504, if
14 you needed to do a buildout, can be used for franchises.
15 So, we work with VetFran, we work with the IFA to kind
16 of get people in the right direction.

17 When I was in Massachusetts, there was a
18 franchise who used to call me and say, hey, we have
19 somebody in California that, you know, we want to, you
20 know, give a franchise to, but they need financing. Can
21 you recommend somebody that I could talk to in
22 California to get a list of lenders? And I would hook
23 them up with the local district office.

24 So, they just found it was easier to call me in,
25 you know, Massachusetts, but it only took me five

1 minutes to hook them up with the people they needed, and
2 they were hooked up. And if it worked, great, and if
3 not -- no, you know -- but we do work with franchises,
4 and all our loan programs can be used for that.

5 MS. CARSON: This is Barb Carson. I was going
6 to specify, there is some -- to get onto the SBA's
7 registry for franchise, there is an element of what
8 control that business -- the franchisee has over the
9 business before they would be accepted on the registry.

10 MR. MILANO: Right, yeah. So, I mean, to -- on
11 the franchise side, you know, SBA determines what a
12 franchise is by control, right? So, we're the Small
13 Business Administration, right? So, if you're buying
14 into a franchise where all your daily decision-making,
15 the payroll, who you hire, et cetera, has to be run up a
16 flagpole to corporate, that's not a true small business,
17 right?

18 So, there are certain control aspects of
19 franchises that -- we want to make sure it's a true
20 small business opportunity, and it has to do with the
21 daily hiring/firing decisions, you know, payroll, what
22 you're doing with your money, et cetera, like that. And
23 that's what the SBA looks at with a franchise.

24 MR. ZACCHEA: So, a little bit far afield of the
25 capital access, but about franchising, I am working with

1 people who are interested in -- not in becoming
2 franchisees but becoming franchisers. Are you able to
3 provide assistance in franchise -- in people becoming
4 franchisers of their business model?

5 MR. MILANO: Yeah. So, we see that not as
6 often, but yes. So, our business advisors -- we have
7 business advisors that have done that. We could hook
8 you up. So, you know, it takes you away from the --
9 from my capital access talk, but, you know, what we
10 could do with business advisors is match you up just
11 like lenders, right?

12 We know which of the advisors do franchises.
13 They became franchisers. They did that to their
14 business. You know, what industry they're in, what
15 their background is, their contracting, capital,
16 whatever.

17 So, we do the same thing with our resource
18 partners and our technical assistance providers that we
19 do with lenders, and I know that's a whole other
20 conversation, but that's the local, you know, kind of
21 secret sauce, right, that you don't really know about.
22 They think of SBA as these, you know, understaffed
23 bureaucratic district offices that just kind of pump out
24 what they need to pump out, but we're out there
25 networking now.

1 SBA is a networking organization, especially in
2 the field, where, you know, our staff is out in the
3 field, you know, probably 75 percent of the time,
4 meeting with economic development organizations, meeting
5 with small business owners, meeting with nonprofits,
6 meeting with lenders, meeting with, you know, state and
7 local and federal agencies. So, that's what we do now
8 in the field. So, we, you know, take advantage of that
9 network at your local level. Yeah, we'll plug you in
10 any time.

11 MR. FIELDER: I just wanted to make a general
12 comment about the grouping of speakers this morning.
13 There's been an underlying theme about go to your
14 district office and your veteran representative. That
15 is not an equal playing field. Some are better than
16 others, and, Ray, compliments. What you've been telling
17 us in the sense of what you've been doing in Boston, we
18 would love to see in the Southeast, and we're not.

19 And, Barb, what I would like to get on the
20 record is a recommendation that somehow your office
21 reach out to these veteran representatives at the
22 district offices, the regional offices, and provide some
23 training, because typically what we're getting in the
24 Southeast is -- with Kurt Mueller and myself, who are
25 both on the committee, we go to some of these -- some of

1 these outreach programs, and not only are the people
2 that are participating in the programs not aware of what
3 you guys are doing, some of the -- some of the veteran
4 outreach people at the SBA are not aware. And so I
5 think somehow what Ray's been doing up in Boston needs
6 to go out to the other ten or eleven regions.

7 MR. MILANO: So, I'll let Barb cap this off, but
8 I agree, and we've talked about that, and, you know,
9 training from the resource partners down to the district
10 offices, you know, we've talked about every district
11 office have a veteran business development officer, and
12 we're trying to formalize that arrangement and how
13 they're connected to our office and what type of
14 training we provide.

15 So, you know, I'll be totally transparent with
16 you, you know, we're the Office of Veterans Business
17 Development. They're under the Office of Field
18 Operations. So, we're two -- you know, we're not
19 siloed, we work together, but we're kind of cracking
20 that nut, so to speak, where we're getting more access
21 to the district offices. We're going to provide more
22 substantial training and best practices to the
23 districts.

24 MR. FIELDER: Thank you. Appreciate it.

25 MS. CARSON: Thank you. And that is a -- I

1 would like you to know what we have been doing and where
2 we hope to go. As Ray said, it's a different program
3 office, and it took a while to build that relationship.
4 I've worked really hard on it, along with a whole team
5 of OVBD, on some of the challenges that we had.

6 One is that the veteran business development
7 officers, it's an additional duty, and so we are not
8 staffed to have that full-time. As Ray made the case in
9 Boston, he was successful at it. He saw veterans cross
10 every demographic. I could spend 100 percent of my time
11 serving vets, and I'm still doing the job you asked me
12 to do. I'm not excluding anyone. We cover everything.
13 So, I would love that message to resonate with other
14 district offices.

15 Another is that the leadership here in the
16 building for field, when we rolled out Boots to
17 Business, it is -- it's in public law now, and it is
18 something that is not yet reflected in the goals and
19 objectives and measures and standards for what those
20 district offices are supposed to perform. And then when
21 you add the complexity of San Diego transitioning
22 veterans, it looks a whole lot different than Wisconsin.
23 So, how do you do that equitably with fewer numbers of
24 folks on the ground?

25 So, the big breakthrough that we just had this

1 month was a meeting that -- with the leadership that I
2 had, with Field Operations, where they will allow me to
3 talk with each district director -- that's 68 of them --
4 tell them, what is your forecast for your area for the
5 transitioning veteran population? What does the VA data
6 tell me about vets that are already in your area? And
7 have those one-on-one conversations about how we go
8 about -- and I know it's a long way off, it's for fiscal
9 '17 that I can really get that in there, but this has
10 never happened before at all.

11 About the education and consistency, that's also
12 been an issue before, not just with -- in the field
13 offices but with our resource partners. It's
14 specifically in their grant language from SBA that they
15 will serve veterans. So, we need to -- I'm accountable
16 for providing them consistent training and interface
17 with us, and I definitely have room to grow there and
18 commit to you that I will.

19 So, I think I'd like to take that one for a
20 future meeting if the Chair allows it, and we will come
21 back to how we are ensuring that we provide consistent
22 education, and we'll start with NSBA, but then as we
23 partner with VA and Labor, who have been carrying water
24 for us on small business ownership, I need to keep them
25 informed so that they can be good referral sources back

1 to where this business belongs.

2 Thanks.

3 MR. PHIPPS: Are there any more questions?

4 All right. We will break -- we will break for
5 lunch here, and we will -- everybody arrive back five
6 minutes before 1:00.

7 (Whereupon, at 12:00 p.m., a lunch recess was
8 taken.)

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1 AFTERNOON SESSION

2 (1:00 p.m.)

3 MR. PHIPPS: We are ready to begin. We would
4 like to welcome Davy back from the Hill. Thank you,
5 Davy, for spending the rest of your afternoon with us.

6 So, our next speaker is going to be Scott
7 Davidson. He's going to be talking about vets and GSA
8 and the Veteran Business Resource Group.

9 MR. DAVIDSON: Okay, ready to go? Everybody can
10 hear me? All right.

11 Good afternoon, everybody. Thanks for joining.
12 I appreciate the fact that I was given the opportunity
13 to speak here today.

14 Some of the things we're going to focus on
15 today, I'm not really -- I know there's slides, but I --
16 you know, we will just hit some points on there. I hate
17 reading off of those, but we're just going to focus on
18 different federal, state, and commercial resources for
19 veteran entrepreneurs.

20 I'm going to kind of get in the weeds a little
21 bit more towards take-aways of current challenges. Most
22 of the stuff I'm going to present are just going to be
23 some factual research, but I'm going to look at what we
24 have to do in order to bridge the gap, you know, as far
25 as working more with commercial and nonprofits and

1 working with our federal partners -- federal and state
2 partners and local partners for that matter.

3 I am here. I do represent the Veterans Success
4 Resource Group. We are a -- we are a nonprofit that's
5 out of -- of course, we're located here in D.C. and New
6 York City. My co-founder is Justin Constantine, who
7 couldn't be here today, unfortunately, because he is in
8 New York City, but if people aren't familiar with
9 Justin, Justin retired as a lieutenant colonel from the
10 Marine Corps. He has a miraculous story, of course,
11 that he was unfortunately -- he was wounded in Iraq when
12 he was shot in the head. The bullet entered below his
13 right ear and came out, when he was on patrol with
14 his -- what was the equivalent of a MiTT team.

15 Anyway, Justin has done some amazing things
16 during his recovery, and one of the things him and I had
17 decided when we got together and focused on was looking
18 to bridge the gap from some of the experiences we had
19 when we transitioned out of the military into the
20 business world, for that matter, and being
21 entrepreneurs. In doing so, we created different
22 resource events and other opportunities for veterans in
23 order to try to bridge those gaps.

24 And then, of course, working with the SBA,
25 working with people like the American Legion, Davy

1 specifically, and some other organizations, we have
2 actually made some pretty great strides.

3 So, in the agenda, like I said, I am going to
4 kind of -- when I walk through this, I am not a slide
5 reader, but I do want to talk about some things, and I
6 know people are going to be familiar with this. I know
7 that, overall -- we will focus on the federal part
8 first.

9 Overall, we know the Federal Government hit
10 their goal this year for service-disabled, veteran-owned
11 small business as a whole, but the thing I always like
12 to focus on are why consistently the top five -- in the
13 top five spend agency that we have three out of the five
14 that don't meet their goals.

15 So, that's the focus of where we're going to be
16 federalwise, right? I mean, if you look at this
17 historically and have done research, the Department of
18 Energy, Health and Human Services, and NASA, I mean,
19 below 1 percent for most cases, and Health and Human
20 Services, at 1.32 percent. This came off of your SBA
21 small business spend data -- actually, unfortunately,
22 the screen looks like it's cut it off, but the cite's on
23 the bottom. I pulled that off of there and updated it
24 yesterday from the most recent FY 2015 numbers.

25 But if you look year after year, that actually

1 hasn't changed. They're pretty steady-state of actually
2 not meeting a single goal. So, that's pretty good, I
3 guess, on their case, and it's amazing that the same
4 thing -- if you look at the actual spend available for
5 eligible dollars, you know, they're meeting the small
6 business -- I mean, when you take a look at even what
7 they're doing, NASA small business, I still can't figure
8 out why these -- they have that much money and they're
9 not meeting their service-disabled, veteran-owned small
10 business goals.

11 So, with that in mind, we talked about federal
12 focus, okay, we know we met the goals, but, again, why
13 the three out of the five aren't making that, but we
14 have a pretty good reason why, and this is just, again,
15 our interpretation of what it is and what it looks like.
16 Some of the programs that do -- have shown some pretty
17 great success when it comes to building veteran programs
18 out.

19 Of course, mentor-protégé programs, contract
20 vehicles specific to veterans, that's always been a -- I
21 would say one of the -- I would say probably one of the
22 focal points as to why you -- where you see success at a
23 federal agency level. That shows to me that there's
24 dedication. That shows to me that they're actually --
25 you have got somebody probably sitting in the OSDBU

1 office that's a dedicated resource who's probably giving
2 the right ideas to their contract folks or people at the
3 program level saying, you know what, these are the types
4 of vehicles that could be set aside for
5 service-disabled, veteran-owned small business, and if
6 we do the correct market research, these are the types
7 of things that will help. These are the types of things
8 that are going to build up and grow that agency's
9 portfolio when it comes to service-disabled,
10 veteran-owned small businesses.

11 And this shows -- 11 agencies have
12 mentor-protégè -- and when I say 11, these are the top
13 agencies that are -- top spend agencies in the Federal
14 Government, right? So, 11 agencies have mentor-protégè
15 programs right now. We have the list. You can download
16 it at any time, and you can see the comparisons. Some
17 people have done some really great jobs on the Internet
18 on consolidating that list.

19 So, everybody, if you take a look at the DoD,
20 why are they doing so well? Thirty of the 68 protégès
21 are service-disabled, veteran-owned small businesses,
22 cited from their -- you know, the DoD site. DHS, the
23 same thing. People think, DHS? But DHS does a good
24 job, too. They have met their goal. Twenty-four out of
25 79 protégès are actually service-disabled, veteran-owned

1 small businesses, meeting their goals.

2 Why? Because if you go into -- and we know
3 about what a mentor-protégè is, I don't really need to
4 spend the time there -- but when you go into why it's a
5 difference is because through those mentor-protégès and
6 other things, they focus contract vehicles on
7 service-disabled, veteran-owned small businesses.

8 Now, if you look at DHS alone, PACTS -- PACTS II
9 now -- well, I just got the notice that they're
10 extending it again, but -- all right, but I'm just
11 saying PACTS, things like that, service-disabled,
12 veteran-owned set-aside. EAGLE II, it has its own
13 track; FirstSource II, its own track for
14 service-disabled veterans; the same thing for TABS.

15 It's important to see that, because that tells
16 you there is an effort, because they're out there
17 actively recruiting service-disabled, veteran-owned
18 small businesses. GSA, even themselves, VET2 GWAC, it's
19 going to be massive, okay? In the past it has been,
20 and -- but you kind of -- from what we're seeing right
21 now just from a business perspective and inquiries on
22 that vehicle that are being -- right now, it's in the
23 draft stage. The RFP is expected to drop first week of
24 March -- was supposed to drop, you know, earlier last
25 year, but --

1 MS. CARSON: GSA is going to give a presentation
2 tomorrow at the Interagency Task Force for those who are
3 interested in that tomorrow.

4 MR. DAVIDSON: Okay.

5 MS. CARSON: Glad you're bringing it up today.

6 MR. DAVIDSON: Okay, yeah. So, just with
7 that -- I'll just say that GSA has focused -- now, they
8 have put that vehicle off for a little bit of time, but
9 the reason was -- I actually spoke to the program
10 manager -- they're making it a little bit better.
11 They're defining -- they're actually taking initial
12 comments seriously, because people beat that thing up
13 pretty bad in the solicitation and the draft response,
14 and we've seen -- I mean, I know I've commented on it,
15 but the kind of -- what we're getting back -- feedback
16 from the industry is that it's becoming a little bit
17 more friendly in the criteria.

18 They have their scoring sheet. A lot of people
19 have taken the time to beat it up but in a positive
20 manner. So, it's going to make things better. But it
21 attests to the fact that when you combine
22 mentor-protégés and people who are interested in
23 servicing the service-disabled, veteran-owned small
24 business or the veteran-owned small business community,
25 you have the result of things like this, where you see

1 focused vehicles on our demographic that yield good
2 results, but what you don't see up there are the NASA
3 programs. You don't see HHS. You don't see the ones
4 that fail to meet those programs. The question is, why?
5 And we're still searching for an answer.

6 If you go to their Web sites, you look at their
7 OSDBUs, you look at all of the things that they have,
8 the dedicated reorganizations to the service-disabled,
9 veteran-owned small business, it's a cut-and-paste, you
10 know, there's nothing really that's focused. But when
11 you go to sites like the DoD, DHS, they're robust.
12 So -- yes, sir, go ahead.

13 MR. FIELDER: My understanding is those other
14 agencies, particularly the GSA GWACs, those other
15 agencies that you're highlighting can use these other --
16 these existing vehicles. They don't have to create
17 vehicles.

18 MR. DAVIDSON: They don't, but the problem is
19 that there are -- so, you have a lot of contracting woe
20 when it comes to that as far as -- so, I'll give you an
21 example. So, let's take a GSA Schedule for example,
22 right? Let's just take a step back on that, take these
23 aside. Schedules, any agency can use, right, but for
24 that matter, they have their own subcontracting plans,
25 and that's great. So, that's good for the agencies.

1 On these vehicles, it gets a little more
2 difficult, because what you see is -- let's take
3 SeaPort-e, for instance. It's a Navy-made vehicle, you
4 know, specifically for that type of IDIQ. Most of the
5 time, the difficulties between contracting shops using
6 outside vehicles exist. There's barriers to entry.
7 It's already very difficult, as you think about it, to
8 go outside.

9 So, if I want to use PEO STRI or any of those
10 types of -- you know, those vehicles, and I'm an Air
11 Force contracting officer, it's not an easy sell.

12 MR. FIELDER: So, I was actually supplementing
13 and adding to your argument, but I know for sure, as a
14 former GSA chief of staff, that the GSA vehicles are
15 designed and training is provided so that others can
16 readily use them.

17 MR. DAVIDSON: Yes.

18 MR. FIELDER: But you are right about the DoD
19 ones.

20 MR. DAVIDSON: Yeah, I'm talking about the DoD
21 ones. GSA, absolutely. Every -- that's the appeal.
22 Doing the GSA, the best thing about the schedules for
23 the GSA is any agency can use them. That's the greatest
24 thing. If you wanted to be -- you know, it doesn't
25 matter who it is --

1 MR. FIELDER: That's what I'm trying to say (off
2 mic) created their vehicles is not a really good excuse
3 because if they really wanted to go (off mic).

4 MR. DAVIDSON: And he's right, but they're not
5 taking that step. There is no barrier to entry from the
6 federal side, but they haven't made the step. Where are
7 the mentor-protégé programs? That's -- I mean, that's a
8 perfect question, right? There is -- where is all that?
9 I mean, the VA we know, right? They've got Vets First.
10 They have an unbelievable amount of programs that are
11 available for that type of acquisition, but I can just
12 throw out there Advisor, \$550 million, service-disabled,
13 veteran-owned, small business set-aside that was out
14 last year. Twelve people won it, okay?

15 So, if you think about it -- or T4 everybody is
16 familiar with. So, those people out there. These firms
17 are the ones that are putting the dedicated time into
18 it, but I just wanted to point out the fact that I still
19 don't -- there has to be some type of pressure or some
20 solution that could be introduced to three out of the
21 top five spend agencies in the Federal Government so
22 that they can at least get above 1 percent of the
23 service-disabled, veteran-owned small businesses,
24 because let's be honest, it's not like they're selling
25 something that nobody else can buy.

1 Are you telling me that the DoE and HHS, they're
2 procuring services that are so unique that it can't
3 somehow, through market research, be fulfilled by a
4 service-disabled, veteran-owned small business? I guess
5 that would be my question to the group. Where does that
6 go?

7 So, I'm sure that on a very general level, the
8 NAICS codes are the same NAICS codes. You're looking at
9 program services, looking at IT work, looking at all
10 things the other agencies buy, yet we don't see how they
11 can't, through market research, find service-disabled,
12 veteran-owned small businesses that they can purchase
13 from.

14 MR. FIELDER: Just to follow up -- and then I'll
15 let it go -- do you have a sense on those three agencies
16 where they are on subcontracting plans?

17 MR. DAVIDSON: As far as meeting their goals?

18 MR. FIELDER: Yes.

19 MR. DAVIDSON: For this year? I mean, they
20 haven't -- they've never met their subcontracting plan
21 goals.

22 MR. FIELDER: Okay. So, it's consistent.

23 MR. DAVIDSON: Yeah, it's consistent.

24 MR. FIELDER: Prime or subcontracting --

25 MR. DAVIDSON: This isn't a one -- okay, I'll

1 give you an example. This isn't a one-over-one anomaly.
2 If you look over the last -- I can just tell you, just
3 from the last research we did, if you look over the last
4 three years, they have never met their goals or even
5 come close.

6 MR. FIELDER: (Off mic.)

7 MR. DAVIDSON: Yeah, that's a problem. I mean,
8 and look -- I mean, if you look at -- here's the
9 problem, too. Look at the spend difference. Look at
10 what they're doing up at the DoD, right? Biggest dollar
11 spend out there, hundred -- you know, as far as the size
12 of their subcontracting goals but yet they still meet
13 it.

14 Now, I can't -- oh, I'm sorry. I usually have a
15 louder voice, but it doesn't pick it up -- but yet they
16 don't meet it. If you look at a piece -- I mean, if you
17 just look at the overall dollar spend, it makes no sense
18 why they can't meet those goals or put the efforts
19 towards it. But that's a great question. No, it's the
20 same thing.

21 And I kind of, you know -- the Department of
22 Education, you know, they're at 0.9, but still, it's the
23 point of -- I can't imagine that they're soliciting
24 something that the veterans can't do when they're making
25 9 percent on women-owned small businesses and, you know,

1 small disadvantaged businesses, 5.49 percent. I just --
2 you know, I know -- it just doesn't make sense on the
3 numbers.

4 Okay, all right. So, I mean, just key
5 take-aways from that -- and I know, because I'm just
6 watching this clock, and I know Mike's going to cut me
7 off exactly at 2:00. So, the key take-aways on that, I
8 mean, the common denominator here is that agencies that
9 have consistently failed to meet service-disabled,
10 veteran-owned small business set-aside goals don't have
11 the same robust programs that the other agencies are
12 putting in place.

13 They don't have the -- they don't -- and, you
14 know, as Ed just pointed out, they have access to it.
15 They're choosing not to go after it or use those
16 vehicles for a reason. Their resources are -- you know,
17 exist, but they choose not to go into that space for
18 whatever reason.

19 And there could be a lot of different barriers
20 or reasons. I'd love to be able to, you know, when you
21 guys have your interagency, maybe ask that question, but
22 year after year, when they're not making those goals,
23 what's the -- why? But we know why. I mean, there's a
24 general pattern. I can go out and search right now and
25 I can look at all the IDIQ vehicles that are being

1 pushed out there from those agencies, and we just don't
2 see the same pattern as the efforts that are being put
3 forth by the people who are meeting their goals.

4 Like I said, of the 21 top spend agencies, only
5 seven have, within their -- this was another interesting
6 fact. Out of the 21 top spend agencies, only seven
7 have, within their own OSDBU office, a dedicated
8 service-disabled, veteran-owned small business advocate.
9 That's a problem, but, I mean, they still meet -- some,
10 even with that, they still meet their goals.

11 But there should be a dedicated resource per,
12 you know, EO-13360, there should be somebody to
13 implement the agency's service-disabled, veteran-owned
14 small business strategic plan -- I hate reading off a
15 slide -- but that brings up a point. If this is calling
16 for that and only seven of the 21 have it, where's the
17 issue? There's nobody dedicated to provide that type of
18 strategic plan inside of those other agencies when you
19 look at the difference. Where is that advocate for us?

20 Sir?

21 MR. FIELDER: Did the Executive Order 13360 --
22 did the Executive Order further require that it be built
23 into the performance plans for senior executives?

24 MR. DAVIDSON: I believe it has. My --

25 MR. FIELDER: I thought that was the

1 initiative --

2 MR. DAVIDSON: Yeah.

3 MR. FIELDER: -- under that Executive Order.

4 MR. DAVIDSON: I believe it has.

5 MR. FIELDER: That makes it even more amazing.

6 MR. DAVIDSON: Yeah. So, if you -- and
7 actually, to quote you there, he -- Ed's right. So, if
8 you look at what the issue is here, there's a -- there's
9 a -- I mean, they have an Executive Order, no one's
10 really following it, and there is nobody there to
11 actually give that strategic --

12 MR. PHIPPS: Is this for SDVOSBs or just for
13 small businesses?

14 MR. DAVIDSON: SDVOSBs.

15 MR. PHIPPS: So, all small business.

16 MR. DAVIDSON: All small business, but this
17 particular -- we're talking about for SDVOSBs. He's
18 talking about for all small businesses. The bottom line
19 is, without an internal champion inside each one of
20 these agencies, we're just not going to see the growth
21 or the expectation that, you know, we're going to see
22 any type of progress made for those agencies.

23 MS. CARSON: Your timing is perfect. You
24 weren't here this morning, but there's an important
25 introduction to make, because I know Mr. Jerry Godwin

1 over here is -- his ears are burning. He is the new
2 policy lead within our shop to be that advocate for
3 service-disabled, veteran-owned small business, in
4 procurement --

5 MR. DAVIDSON: Okay.

6 MS. CARSON: -- across federal agencies, and
7 there are -- the channels through which he gets the
8 background and the leverage that he needs to take that
9 on is through this body and the Interagency Task Force
10 for Veteran Small Business Development, which meets
11 tomorrow. So, your timing is perfect and so is the
12 content. I really appreciate it.

13 MR. DAVIDSON: Thank you, Barb.

14 Yeah, just something that's always been -- this
15 is a sticking point for me, because it's -- the
16 authority's there, the direction's there, it's not
17 happening. So, there is a significant issue, and I
18 always will point back to the fact that we have the only
19 socioeconomic status that's earned in the Federal
20 Government. Everything else -- we know, it's the only
21 status that's earned, but yet we're still not getting
22 the due that is actually required. I'm not asking for a
23 handout. I'm just asking for what's been on paper in
24 the past.

25 Okay, so we're going to shift gears. So, for

1 federal reserves, we're going to talk about PTACs --
2 PTACs or PTAPs, depending on where you are and what name
3 change it is. I think they're great resources. Again,
4 we're going to try to go to the high points here just
5 for timing reasons.

6 We're talking about this, again, for the benefit
7 of service-disabled, veteran-owned small businesses.
8 This just gives background, of course, for you to read,
9 when they were established and some of the great things
10 that they've done.

11 The services offered -- everyone should be
12 familiar with what the services are that they offer. We
13 work with the SBDCs and the PTACs and some of the
14 nonprofit world that we do, and they provide excellent,
15 you know, services. We will talk about services that
16 are not offered because that's a little bit more
17 important for what our cause is here today.

18 Services not offered that actually have an
19 impact when it comes to veteran-owned businesses and
20 services for veteran-owned businesses are the general
21 business training and small business development
22 counseling, assistance to individuals interested in
23 starting a new business, marketing on behalf of
24 clients -- which I understand why they don't offer that
25 service -- and then employee development-related

1 training.

2 Now, why that's important is because some of the
3 chief complaints we're getting back from just -- this is
4 anecdotal, because we get to meet with a lot of veteran
5 business owners, especially at our events, at different
6 times and all the different places we kind of work
7 through when I speak and other places, there's a
8 disconnect.

9 A lot of the resources -- and I'm going to hit
10 this later on, too -- but a lot of the problems -- no, I
11 shouldn't say problems, not a good word here -- a lot of
12 the challenges that we're facing, especially if you're a
13 business owner, especially young millennials, things of
14 that nature, which is going to be our next generation we
15 have to worry about, especially coming out of the wars,
16 you know, if you look at the definition of millennial,
17 18 to 35, you know, that's it right there. There's your
18 core set probably where most of the focus is right now
19 for people -- for veterans starting businesses.

20 Yes, there's an older demographic there, but we
21 also know that everything that's being focused
22 propagandawise is actually on that demographic, and
23 there should be, because they should reap the benefit of
24 just serving through, you know, 14-plus years of war.
25 With that in mind, most of the services offered out

1 there are for startups. We all know there's different
2 phases to business, you know, Harvard Business Review
3 always likes to say there's a point in time in
4 business -- there's different stages, but the one stage
5 they talk about is the take-off stage, right?

6 That's where you get to the point that, okay,
7 we're through the startup point, that's great, but
8 that's a difficult time. That's, you know, they always
9 say the tipping point, right? There's a lot of
10 resources that they require that are different from what
11 occurs at startup, okay, whether it's changing the stage
12 of marketing, changing the stage -- even financing, how
13 do you find a different organizational approach, you
14 start to work in different laws because you actually
15 have started to see growth, tax. You can go up and down
16 the list, and it's a long list.

17 I need to know what organization's out there
18 that currently gives them that kind of take-off support,
19 not startup. There's great things there. Boots to
20 Business we know is great, EBV is great, all those --
21 you know, they have all different types of programs out
22 there that do fantastic jobs, but the question
23 becomes -- and I get this a lot -- where are we once we
24 actually start to do well? Where, if we make a mistake,
25 although -- oh, we failed six months in. It happens,

1 right? A lot of businesses we know don't make it a
2 year. We're at the year and a half mark. Who do I talk
3 to?

4 You guys have put me on this great path, you
5 trained me, you did all this great stuff, but who -- do
6 I have a regular resource that I could tap into that
7 allows me to go ahead and grow and learn to grow? Where
8 are my legal resources? I'm not asking for handouts,
9 but you guys have pushed me through this great free
10 program, told me about access to capital, you trained me
11 on entrepreneurship. What happens after you get to that
12 point?

13 So, that's -- I hit on it later, but why I say
14 that and why it's important is that even at the PTAC
15 level, even at the SBDCs, and even in the commercial
16 world, all the people who claim that they're doing great
17 things -- and they are -- for the startups in the world,
18 there's nothing there for that midrange. There might be
19 kind of points of light in different places, but there's
20 nothing that's a focused program.

21 So, with that being said, we go back to look
22 at -- to focus on PTACs when it comes to veterans. So,
23 if you look at how the breakdown of PTACs was, 89 total
24 PTACs in the U.S., and of these, 14 PTACs are colocated
25 with grantee SBDCs. SBDCs are great organizations, and,

1 of course, there's one PTAC that's with the Women's
2 Business Development Center.

3 Most states have one PTAC, some states have
4 multiple. Of course, most are going to be colocated
5 through academic institutions, nonprofits, and state and
6 local government, in New York, et cetera. But if you
7 take a look, here's where it kind of slips a little bit,
8 where there's a disconnect and we probably need a little
9 bit more training, and this is where we can help. I
10 think it's an easy -- you know, as far as to bridge that
11 gap.

12 Out of the PTACs, only five of them have
13 directed services towards veteran-owned businesses,
14 basically. Out of the five, Arizona, Los Angeles, San
15 Antonio, Kentucky, and then Columbia, South Carolina.
16 So, they're colocated with the SBDC, and this gives you
17 the breakdown. Now, when I say that, those are direct
18 services that are specifically focused on veterans.

19 Now, when we met with the SBDCs this summer at
20 the national conference, we gave a -- I was on a panel
21 that discussed -- and had -- every actual representative
22 from all 89 PTACs were in the room, and they were
23 business counselors, and the topic we discussed was
24 veteran business outreach. How do you do that,
25 especially startupwise? What do you -- you know, we had

1 basically what was a town hall open dialogue, and there
2 was a panel of veteran business owners, and we spoke
3 back and forth and did that.

4 The majority of the conversation was I don't
5 know how to deal with a veteran business owner. I don't
6 know what to do. What do I -- and it all focused around
7 things like, well, what happens if they have PTSD? And
8 I was, like, that's the most ignorant thing, but, okay,
9 let's discuss that. I mean, these are real questions
10 coming from people who interact from -- every day.

11 There was only one actual veteran in the room
12 from the Lynchburg, Virginia, SBDC, who -- you know, he
13 was an Iraq vet who was actually a millennial, did a
14 great job, but he sat up there and said that. He goes,
15 well, who else here is a veteran? Nobody else raised
16 their hand but him. That's from the SBDC side.

17 And then he explained, went through the whole
18 thing, but it resonated with me, because I realized --
19 I'm like, well, if I'm a millennial veteran and I'm
20 walking in there and they are going to have this
21 predis -- you know, this -- this preconceived notion
22 that we have PTSD or we're very hard to deal with or I
23 don't know what to do with you, it's going to be a
24 barrier.

25 So, hearing it from the horse's mouth was a

1 little interesting, especially when they were all --
2 every state was represented there in that conference.
3 So, I thought that was an interesting take-away from
4 that.

5 And then when I went back and we looked at it
6 and did research, it rang true, because then I realized,
7 well, that makes sense. And the only people here were
8 the ones that came up afterwards and said, yes, we have
9 these programs, but we still lack the expertise. There
10 weren't veterans running those programs. I'm not saying
11 it's a prerequisite. I'm not saying that you have to be
12 a veteran to be an SBDC director or to work there at
13 all.

14 I'm just saying there's a -- there's a difficult
15 way to connect, I guess, and it makes a big impact when
16 that veteran walks in, because the interesting story,
17 the SBDC director from Lynchburg came there with a
18 business idea, was rejected, walked out, and then became
19 the business -- the SBDC director, I think, less than a
20 year later, because he said this was terrible and he
21 lobbied for it.

22 And actually, one of the reasons why they took
23 it -- he still has his file. He brings -- he showed it
24 to us, the whole thing, how they said he walked out of
25 the meeting, because he's like, they don't get me; we're

1 not on the same page; I don't understand. It was just
2 not a good common -- you know, there was no good
3 handshake there when they left. But he's making a big
4 difference now, especially because he's in that right
5 demographic and age group.

6 PTAC take-aways, I just said. Lack of focus on
7 veteran-related business, I mean, what is it? I can
8 walk in there and we say, you know, everybody's the same
9 for small businesses, but there is a difference.
10 There's a lot of different resources out there, and
11 there's -- it's just an education item that we need to
12 provide to the PTACs, whether it's from the commercial
13 side, the federal side, whoever has to get it done,
14 there needs to be a little bit more there, focus,
15 attention on veteran-related issues when starting a
16 business. There is going to be a different approach,
17 especially with the type of business they want to start,
18 et cetera.

19 I guess -- I'm not going to beat a dead horse.
20 Most don't have the knowledge, especially if you are
21 looking at the gov-con perspective, CVE certifications,
22 things of that nature, building, you know, your
23 operating agreements correctly, making sure they're
24 bulletproof. Those services don't exist really today.
25 They will have to go to a third party, which is fine.

1 You can go to a law firm, you can go to whoever it is,
2 but at a minimum, there should be some good guidance
3 coming out of those areas, especially if it's going to
4 be focused on veteran businesses.

5 All right, we've talked about this also. The
6 same thing on PTACs. Most programs, whether it's
7 commercial, it's federal, whatever, they're focused on
8 the startup. No one's looking at the long term. And
9 we're finding more and more, as people are now entering
10 the space, they're being required -- they're getting
11 those kind of questions. They're saying, okay, what do
12 we do now? This is great. We're here for a year, we've
13 made it. Now I have to grow. How do I sustain this
14 kind of growth, et cetera?

15 It's, you know, what do we do marketingwise?
16 How do we -- those questions, I mean, it's great that we
17 can field those questions. We get them on social media,
18 get them through all these different avenues of
19 approach, but -- you know, we're an organization that's
20 happy, but we wish that there was a way that we could
21 all tackle the problem together, I guess. There
22 shouldn't be just one body to do it.

23 Real quick, the other thing, one of the
24 things -- and I say it again, we need to work together
25 with all commercial programs to fill veteran business

1 knowledge gaps, end of story. I mean, that's what the
2 collaborative effort means. There has to be -- there is
3 synergy, it exists, right? Every -- if you're a VSO,
4 you're a -- you know, a federal agency that's dedicated
5 to that, I mean, the synergy's already there. There
6 really isn't a reason why they shouldn't work together.
7 I don't -- there shouldn't be a reason why that should
8 even have to be on there.

9 State opportunities. So, for states, states are
10 interesting, right? And this is for -- you know, this
11 could be for any type of service or product, but for
12 states, 50 states -- 24 out of 50 states do not
13 recognize a veteran-owned or a service-disabled,
14 veteran-owned small business as a specific category. A
15 big number, so half, just about.

16 Arizona -- you know, if you look at some of
17 them, nine states recognize veteran-owned small
18 businesses, 17 recognize service-disabled, veteran-owned
19 small businesses, three recognize the -- what's it
20 called? -- I'm sorry, recognize both designations.
21 These do not include any city-level initiatives. There
22 are plenty of those, and we will go into them.

23 The big take-aways here, this is just for you
24 really to read. It kind of gives you what Texas does,
25 how do you qualify. They don't -- you qualify under

1 different -- so, this is interesting. This is where
2 there's a disconnect, right? So, what they're doing is,
3 most of the states, although they're making the
4 provision available, they're allowing you to qualify
5 under different statuses.

6 So, I'll give you -- the lovely great State of
7 Virginia, we're right here, right? You can qualify
8 under small, women-owned, and minority designation.
9 There is no set-aside for veteran small business. I
10 think it's great that they cut that -- basically include
11 you in that loophole, but the same thing. They're not
12 going to take your certification -- this is the other
13 thing about this. You guys have -- your CVE doesn't
14 matter in any of these, by the way. You have just got
15 to recertify underneath a different set of rules for all
16 of these simply because -- you know, Pennsylvania,
17 Oregon, Arkansas, Virginia, Maryland, Kansas, Florida,
18 Texas, you're all going to be under a different
19 designation in order to qualify for any state-level
20 contract for that matter.

21 But, again, it's a different process, so you
22 could go through your CVE, and you are still going to
23 have to go through that -- whatever MBE process or
24 whatever they want to call it in a different state,
25 because everybody calls it something different, in order

1 to qualify. They don't have specific designations for
2 those types of businesses in those states.

3 Only five states do, that's great. So, if
4 you're looking at Illinois, Louisiana, Texas, Utah, and
5 New York, they have actual initiative programs that
6 they've started in order to go ahead and do that. So,
7 these are actual state-sponsored programs.

8 So, New York, of course, the Service-Disabled,
9 Veteran-Owned Small Business Act, I'm going to hit on
10 that a little bit, because I really like what they're
11 doing there, and we're working -- I have been doing a
12 lot of work with them. But, again, this is all for you
13 just to read as far as the specific programs and
14 initiatives.

15 Other states have partnership programs with
16 different private organizations, things of that nature,
17 but these are the ones we found through research that
18 focus on startup, education assistance, things of that
19 nature.

20 New York State, the only reason I am going to
21 focus on this, because they're going in the right
22 direction, as a good example. In 2014, Governor Cuomo
23 signed into law the Service-Disabled, Veteran-Owned
24 Small Business Act, which set aside 6 percent to
25 service-disabled, veteran-owned small businesses, about

1 \$400 million a year, roughly.

2 The Act did a couple things. One of them was
3 creating the set-aside. The second one was creating a
4 business development office specifically focusing on
5 service-disabled, veteran-owned small businesses, and
6 they dedicated resources actually to go out and develop
7 businesses within those agencies in the -- at the state
8 level to use veterans, which, again, is a -- when it
9 starts to really work, it will be a great model.

10 There are some differences, like we talked
11 about, just because even if you're CVE certified, it
12 doesn't mean you're going to be a service-disabled,
13 veteran-owned small business, New York state certified.
14 One of the main reasons is they make you have a 10
15 percent service-disabled connected disability rating,
16 not the zero percent like the Federal Government does
17 for VA. So, you must have at least a 10 percent.

18 Other states -- you know, in order to qualify
19 for that particular item, and you have to go through
20 their process. Even if you're CVE-certified, it doesn't
21 matter. They'll ask you the question, are you
22 CVE-certified? You say yes. All that does is it will
23 expedite your application. You still have to fill out a
24 separate application that is different from the CVE
25 certification, provide some different documentation,

1 including things that show that you do business in New
2 York, things of that nature.

3 They do all foreign entities at a decent level
4 to go in there. So, if you show that you've done
5 business in New York -- and when I say "done business,"
6 you have a presence in New York -- foreign entities are
7 allowed to certify in New York, and I know that because
8 one of my companies is a Virginia-based company, and
9 we're certified in New York because we do a lot of
10 outreach work for New York City, for veterans, things of
11 that nature, and we've brought some different things
12 there. But I also know that several other veteran --
13 service-disabled, veteran-owned small businesses from
14 the Virginia area, Maryland, have certified foreign
15 entities into New York, and they're taking advantage of
16 this program.

17 So, they are -- they have some prerequisites,
18 but I do like the fact that they are letting other
19 people in there. And just the only sad part is, if you
20 look at New York being the number four largest or fifth
21 largest veteran population state right now, they only
22 have 185 businesses that are certified since 2014. If
23 you look at that piece of the pie, it's not good. Those
24 numbers should be higher, especially when you -- in just
25 New York City alone, you know, 241,000 veterans in that

1 area.

2 If you just look at the search there, there's a
3 tremendous amount of opportunity. It's just that it's
4 not happening, but it needs to be more widespread so
5 they can take advantage of it, because there's a lot of
6 significant dollars to be spent at that level. And
7 that's any state that's going to accept you for that
8 matter.

9 So, state contracting take-away, quickly, as we
10 look at it is -- again, one of the things that I find,
11 it's one of the most overlooked sources of revenue for
12 service-disabled, veteran-owned small businesses. Every
13 time I talk to somebody who's in the gov-con space,
14 everybody's, like, DoD, VA. I'm like, what about your
15 State of New York? What about Virginia? What about the
16 ones that allow you to do that? You need to be able to
17 do that. City of Fairfax spends a lot of money. City
18 of Arlington, a lot of money. State of Virginia, a lot
19 of money. You need to look at city and state contracts.

20 Again, creative collaboration between state and
21 federal resources need to be especially examined at the
22 PTAC and SBDC level. I know that there's a good level
23 right now as far as how we trade resources there, but I
24 think there could be room for improvement, especially in
25 the education, when it comes to veteran and

1 service-disabled, veteran-owned business outreach and
2 how do you work with them, give them the opportunities,
3 explain to them I know there's shortfalls, I know we
4 don't have a single point of contact Web page that has
5 every resource available for veterans, which would be
6 great because it's so large and convoluted, and
7 eventually we will get to that point in life, I hope,
8 but there needs to be at least some kind of central
9 point where people can take a look and find these
10 resources, especially things like access to capital and
11 other types of business development services.

12 There's a disconnect, like we said, between the
13 federal and state and city and the service-disabled,
14 veteran-owned small business process simply because, as
15 you can see, everybody has different requirements,
16 depending on where you are, and in some cases, if you
17 want to certify in a state, city -- city, state, and
18 federal level, you actually would have to do three
19 different applications in some states that have
20 different requirements each. So, that's just something
21 to think about.

22 If there's any way we ever could streamline
23 that, that would be great. And then there's greater
24 commercial -- greater coordination on the state level
25 with commercial programs to gain a better understanding

1 of the veteran market. It all just comes down to
2 education.

3 Just a quick hint, just to let everybody see, so
4 at the city level, I just wanted to kind of show you a
5 couple interesting things about the -- what I would
6 consider the most friendly states, and this came from
7 Vetpreneur Magazine, which we do some good work with
8 them, but, yeah, even at the still level, you can see
9 some of the great things that we're rolling out, and
10 they're rolling -- I mean, they give you different
11 bid -- bid preference things.

12 They'll hold it at a higher level of 6 percent,
13 5 percent, 3 percent, but it's sad that -- like, the
14 City of Pittsburgh is going to give you a 5 percent, you
15 know, set-aside goal for veteran-owned businesses, yet
16 the Federal Government can't hit in the top five the
17 same thing. But it's -- I like to see that there are --
18 it's slowly starting to trickle down, and these are all
19 recent. None of these are -- like, have been decades
20 old. This is all within the last five years.

21 So, if you take a look at how it's going to
22 start to trickle down, we expect to see more, but
23 there's about -- there's a good list of cities out there
24 when it comes to how they're actually changing. So,
25 that's what I'll just say about cities, there's

1 opportunity. They buy everything just like every other
2 state or federal agency. So, people have to look at the
3 cities.

4 Commercial resources. This is generic in the
5 sense that these are things we have already discussed,
6 right, we've always talked about. We have to bridge the
7 gap. The commercial, the nonprofits, universities, all
8 the different programs out there are great, right? They
9 are doing great things, Chambers of Commerce, EVV, IVMF,
10 I mean, you could just go down the list.

11 One of the issues we've seen is lack of
12 coordination between everybody. That's a major issue.
13 It usually boils down to competition as far as getting
14 constituency dollars, which causes issues, and I'm not
15 going to point fingers at anybody here, but -- but --
16 no, the bottom line is -- yeah, no, the -- there's a
17 common goal that we have, right? If we're really in
18 this to be advocates, there's a common goal in what we
19 do.

20 The bottom line is that when you take out -- you
21 know, the whole point of, oh, my God, how is it going to
22 affect the bottom line, and we're true advocates in
23 making sure that we can provide the resources we want,
24 especially on the business front, it changes the game,
25 and it should, right, because that's what the

1 commercials are there for. They're there to fill the
2 gaps. Not everybody can answer every question, right?
3 I know that. It doesn't matter who you are. Federal,
4 state, local agencies, that's fine. It's difficult.

5 You know, there's a market there that has to be
6 addressed. That's where commercial partners come in.
7 The lack of coordination has caused issues. We've seen
8 the greatest success from the nonprofit side because we
9 started to coordinate and lift a lot of those barriers.
10 Bringing everybody together in a resource-type
11 atmosphere has really made a significant difference when
12 it comes to addressing the problems or issues and
13 challenges of a veteran today, including their spouses
14 and their caregivers. That has been the number one
15 focus for us.

16 One of the things, as far as commercial
17 resources go -- and I'm going to continue on that path
18 and we spoke about it earlier -- is -- and I can't hit
19 it enough -- we've got all that startup education,
20 that's great, but we've got to get past that mark, that
21 12-month mark, 18-, 24-month, we've got to look at that.
22 That's one of the things we definitely have to continue
23 doing.

24 One of the organizations we work with that's the
25 nonprofit is the Veterans Success Resource Group. Why

1 bring it up? This is just an example of how we can
2 bridge that gap, okay, and this is what we're currently
3 doing. We have done proof of concept already now three
4 times, and we've seen some pretty significant success
5 stories, especially with -- between Justin and myself
6 and a pretty robust network.

7 The events that we're doing to work with our
8 partners in the SBA, work with, you know, all different
9 types of federal agencies, has yielded some pretty
10 significant results. Basically, what we said was, how
11 do we get everybody into one place and make sure that
12 they get the answer? Whether it's from startup, whether
13 it's an 18-month-old business or it's a five-year-old
14 veteran business, how do we get that answer?

15 So, what we decided to do, we said, okay --
16 because we've experienced ourselves, going through there
17 and building businesses and realizing we don't have
18 specific resources, and so what we've done is basically
19 get an expo, get an expo hall. We invite nonprofits,
20 VSOs, Fortune 500 companies, everything, federal
21 agencies, state agencies, local agencies, and we put
22 them all together, and basically we say, okay, here's
23 what we're going to do.

24 We take the money barrier out there. We
25 actually don't take -- we don't accept, don't charge for

1 tables, things of that nature, so there is no more
2 excuses as why do people not show up, and basically we
3 work with just the different organizations and we
4 produce what is a full resource spectrum for veteran
5 business owners, from cradle to -- well, no, I like to
6 say cradle to cradle, because you consistently start
7 over.

8 How we do that is we have -- it's just a general
9 expo hall where everybody can go and interact, but
10 that's just the beginning of how it's formed. The other
11 parts of it are the interesting parts. One we talk
12 about is we have round tables, and at the round tables
13 we bring in subject matter experts from Fortune 500
14 companies, top law firms, things of that nature, and
15 they will discuss multiple topics in a one-on-one -- not
16 one-on-one, but in a round table environment.

17 Each table holds between 12 and 16 depending on
18 the size of the room, and they will address topics like
19 what are the top legal issues that businesses are facing
20 during midterm phase? What are -- you know, if you're a
21 construction company -- we had talked about surety
22 bonding, and how do you -- the best way to approach
23 that; top human resources and EEO type of issues that
24 could come up as a business owner, especially midtier;
25 the best way to do recruiting.

1 It runs the gamut, all focused on business, all
2 focused on growing, all focused on -- if you're a
3 startup, there's a table there that talks about how do
4 you do that. We have people from, you know, different
5 VCs talk about how do you do capital -- you know,
6 capital raise the right away; how do you find different,
7 you know, different sources -- I'm sorry -- for access
8 to capital? Anything you can think of.

9 We said we have to be able to present it in one
10 area and location, and that's what we started to do, and
11 we saw a -- what we did notice was that got the greatest
12 response, because people would say -- I mean, even -- we
13 had people talk about overseas contingency contracting,
14 that made a big difference. I mean, people were just
15 interested in all the different available opportunities
16 out there that they didn't know existed before, and in
17 that networking kind of -- they still felt it was one on
18 one. We got a great response from that.

19 In doing so, the feedback was tremendous. We --
20 you know, we said, okay, from this point, let's refine
21 how we're going to do this. So, we started to go out to
22 different partners, and then we made different partners,
23 especially with Dun & Bradstreet, of course, the largest
24 global business recordholder in -- ever, for that
25 matter. They hold -- I think 98 percent of all business

1 records are through Dun & Bradstreet. We went to them
2 specifically because in the business world, we knew that
3 they could touch everybody. There was nobody else. We
4 knew that they had access to every single person. So,
5 we have a long-term engagement with Dun & Bradstreet
6 where they partner with us on these events, and we're
7 doing multiple different initiatives with them.

8 To go back to the expos, one of the initiatives
9 we're doing are business planning competitions. So,
10 we're rolling this out in 2016, actually March 2016, and
11 here in D.C. is going to be our first one, and what --
12 it's actually going to be March 22nd and 23rd.

13 So, what the business planning competition is,
14 we're actually going to do this on a regional scale.
15 After we do the first one -- which, of course, we always
16 like to do proof of concept, hone it, and then roll it
17 out. But basically a business planning competition, Dun
18 & Bradstreet has a specific technology platform that
19 allows for voting, and they've done this before, and
20 only for veteran businesses, service-disabled,
21 veteran-owned businesses.

22 They are going to do a Shark Tank pitch the day
23 before -- it's a two-day event -- a Shark Tank pitch,
24 everybody gets -- you know, we whittle down the
25 competition as it goes. Then the final day, when we

1 have our resource event, when we have the round tables,
2 everybody can take advantage of that, at the end of the
3 night or the end of the day, we're going to do
4 basically -- there's voting through the day, they have a
5 social media platform that does the voting, and then the
6 winners are declared.

7 So -- and the amounts are -- I mean, what we
8 decided to do is to make sure that everybody gets it, it
9 starts at \$15,000 for first place, for seed money, and
10 then it goes to \$5,000 for second, and then there's five
11 \$1,000 prizes for the remaining contestants, so
12 everybody actually gets it. So, it actually
13 incentivises people to get to the point of -- to
14 participate. So, at least they get something out of it
15 in a sense, all right?

16 The ideas are vetted, of course, to make it to
17 that final day, so it's not like, you know, we just give
18 it away. But that's what we're going to do on a
19 regional basis, and we think that will drive more of
20 that entrepreneurship. But with that in mind, they
21 still get to go and attend the resource event, which is
22 going to be that next day, and get all that knowledge
23 and contacts and networking.

24 The other part of this, which is really an
25 exciting part, is the matchmaking that also fits into

1 this now that we're rolling out this year. We've
2 partnered with a company, it's a software company that
3 has developed a very robust mapping platform, which is
4 basically you see a map, it has every veteran-owned --
5 service-disabled, veteran-owned -- actually, every small
6 business in the United States that's registered in SAM.

7 It has the entire map. It has their NAICS
8 codes. It has if they're on the GSA Schedule. It has
9 if they are -- what vehicles they're on. And you
10 literally can drill down into a mile -- if you say I
11 need to get services in Atlanta, I need to find a
12 cleaning company that's a service-disabled,
13 veteran-owned small business, that's on Schedule 75 --
14 just making something up -- I can drill down to Atlanta,
15 and I will know exactly the point of contact name on
16 that.

17 So, through that and through Dun & Bradstreet,
18 because they have a very robust supplier diversity
19 program, if you can imagine, we are matching -- people
20 who sign up for the competition, they're vetted based
21 upon location, and then automatically they know that
22 they're qualified individuals, and then they're set up
23 that way during these events. Everybody's notified
24 prior to that, of course, and, you know, the companies
25 are vetted, but this mapping technology is great for

1 matchmaking. So, that's how we kind of grow them.

2 And it's not just for gov-con, actually. It's
3 for everybody. We have supplier diversity people in the
4 Dun & Bradstreet program, like Coca-Cola. They don't
5 care about government contracts, but they care about --
6 they want to do business with veterans. They want to
7 expand their chain.

8 Ingersol Rand's another one. They want to
9 expand their chain. They're calling for all different
10 types of supplier diversity. It doesn't have to be
11 gov-con. They want to see -- I want to sell and be
12 partners with these people.

13 So, taking it outside of the gov-con, which, of
14 course, we all know is a big thing, especially with the
15 supplier demands, subcontracting plans, things of that
16 nature, but there's a commercial application, too, and
17 we're starting to see that, you know, good faith kind of
18 push from Corporate America saying we want to
19 participate in these programs. How do we get in there?

20 If you're on a government contract, we know it's
21 easy -- a little bit easier, but from the commercial
22 side where they're solely focused on that, it's a little
23 bit more difficult. So, we figure we'll bridge the gap
24 that way by saying, okay, commercial companies, I can
25 give you an answer. We'll match you with these things,

1 sit down, talk, see what matches, but prior to that,
2 they're well vetted so they're matched. We don't want
3 to waste anybody's time. We don't want to get anybody's
4 hopes up. That doesn't make any sense, but it allows
5 good networking.

6 The other part of the competition between the
7 business plan, the networking, and then the resource
8 group, that gives you -- I mean, federal agencies will
9 be there as well, state agencies will come as well,
10 because we're working with all those partners, so that
11 you also can matchmake with them, too. But we're
12 looking at it from a different point of view.

13 We want to teach it right. We want them to know
14 that in order to grow, you are not going to be a prime
15 the first day out of the gate, okay? We are going to
16 teach you. You are going to sub for a while, you're
17 going to build up your experience, you're going to grow,
18 or if you have hit that level, then we are going to put
19 you in a much different area.

20 We are actually going to put you on a different
21 track from where you are going to grow. If you're a
22 prime and let's say you're five years in the business,
23 we are going to give you those resources in order to go
24 in that direction. That's where we look at. We will
25 put you in the right subject matter expert round tables,

1 we'll put you in one-on-ones with whoever it requires,
2 because we have a network we're building.

3 And this is also kind of exciting, but I'll
4 announce it anyway, it doesn't matter, but CVS, we're
5 working with the -- one of the chief -- the general
6 counsel of CVS is starting a program that's going to be
7 basically a legal program for veterans, but it's for
8 everything veteran-related.

9 We're actually going to be doing a webinar, and
10 I'll show you in a second on the webinar series, but
11 there's going to be a webinar in March that's going to
12 be with a panel of attorneys. So, Rich Jones is the
13 chief veteran officer for CVS and with their tax general
14 counsel, he has organized an incredible amount of
15 attorneys who are going to do pro bono work for
16 everything you can think of, from marriage/divorce,
17 adjudication of bad military record or military record
18 discharge, business-related for anything that's going to
19 be corporate -- you know, corporate documents, CVE
20 certification, things of that nature.

21 They're forming a network that's going to allow
22 for veterans, at no cost -- I mean, I know that they
23 have networks out there, but he's going to be specific
24 on rolling out that program with some pretty specific,
25 significant names in the legal community.

1 But it's going to focus on business, it's going
2 to focus on everything veteran. We're actually going to
3 roll out that in -- it's going to be in March. That's
4 just an example of some of our -- and then I'll go back
5 to that. Yeah, so it's -- it's right here. So, that
6 will be in March.

7 What -- and I want to -- I'll just jump ahead,
8 because I'm looking at the time. I've got five minutes.
9 So, the webinar series, this is what we were just
10 talking about, so Dun & Bradstreet has partnered with
11 VSRJ. We are providing now, because we've had such a
12 nice demand, bimonthly webinars, again, on all these
13 different topics that are going to be business-related,
14 and they are going to be at different phases of
15 business, and they're all timely.

16 So, interesting enough take-away, which I kind
17 of was speaking earlier -- actually, I think I was
18 talking to Ray about it -- we've noticed that live
19 events in today's world, especially with the
20 millennials, they don't care for live events. They want
21 the recorded event that they want to download in podcast
22 form. That's the feedback we got.

23 I was skeptical at first, but I said I will give
24 it to the experts, because they do this for a living,
25 especially the guy who's the head of the social media

1 group for Dun & Bradstreet. I said, okay, prove me
2 wrong.

3 And it showed -- they showed me the uptick on
4 what happens is that very few people will attend a live
5 webinar event, but as you see an hour, the next day,
6 even now, like I said, a month later, they are still
7 downloading the podcast and visiting the page, and
8 they've consistently done it.

9 And we've actually had to make it -- we have
10 actually had to open it up to allow people to register,
11 because we started to get emails saying, hey, how do we
12 download this from our podcast, because we want to be
13 able to listen to these types of podcasts on our own
14 time?

15 So, just something -- if you guys are into the
16 social media thing, don't feel bad if you don't see a
17 major webinar presence in most cases, because we had
18 four hundred and something people sign up, and we were
19 like, well, why is the numbers low on the attendance?
20 They go, because everybody is going to download these
21 afterwards. And sure as can be, to now, a month later,
22 they're still downloading the podcast. So, it's -- and
23 we're still getting questions from that webinar. So,
24 it's a nice tool to have.

25 But with that being said, these are some of the

1 examples of topics that we are going to reach out,
2 because we want to be a little bit different. We also
3 want to hit every kind of phase or point in business.
4 You know, one of the -- you know, this was one of the
5 points of interest, top millennial entrepreneur
6 resources and barriers for business, for entry. That's
7 going to be one.

8 Then you're looking at top business legal issues
9 for 2016, and the esteemed colleague over there from
10 Venable will be providing information on that. Top
11 veteran business resources, we are actually going to do
12 that. We did that earlier on Veterans Day, but we are
13 going to do it again because we had such an incredible
14 response afterwards. We are going to have to do it
15 again, because we got more questions back from it than
16 we expected. So, we are going to be a little more
17 focused this time, and Dun & Bradstreet said we need to
18 do it again just because the response has been great.

19 And then things like we talked about, social
20 media marketing for businesses. Now, that's going to be
21 both an advanced class -- a 101 and advanced. So, we
22 actually have -- some significant people in that
23 industry are going to be doing that type of town hall,
24 recruiting and human resource pitfalls for businesses.

25 And then there's a CVE certification class

1 that's going to be given by our friends at the American
2 Legion, and they're going to be hosting that along with
3 Vetpreneur Magazine, and they're also going to be
4 providing input on that as well.

5 So, we talked about the -- you know, how the
6 instructors all range from subject matter experts to
7 Fortune 500s and the focus of the event. The bottom
8 line, the focus of the event is to improve coordination
9 between private and public entities. On some of these,
10 there's SBDC representatives that are going to be
11 speaking on the panels. There are some other government
12 agency folks that are going to be speaking on some of
13 these panels.

14 So, we are excited to have that, but we want to
15 mix the world because we think that's the gap that we
16 have to bridge. We have got to get everybody together
17 so they share the ideas and we see the synergy together,
18 especially when it comes to veteran-owned businesses.

19 And right on time.

20 MR. ZACCHEAR: Scott, so in my -- oh, okay.

21 MS. CARSON: State your name.

22 MR. ZACCHEA: So, in my guise as the founder of
23 the Connecticut Veterans Chamber of Commerce, one of the
24 things that we're working on for the next legislative
25 session, 2016, and that we're very attentive to is the

1 state contracting preferences. Connecticut currently
2 does not have one --

3 MR. DAVIDSON: Right.

4 MR. ZACCHEA: -- and that is on our agenda for
5 2016. I -- we're working on it. It's come up in the
6 State Legislature before and has died in committee, but
7 this is something that I would like to speak to you
8 about as well, because obviously you have done the
9 research. We have done some research as well on it, but
10 we would like to -- I'd like to connect you to our
11 counsel about that to discuss that in the future.

12 MR. DAVIDSON: Absolutely. Like you said, you
13 have my card. Let me know so we can get offline and we
14 can just talk about how we can assist.

15 Yes, sir?

16 MR. AUMENT: Ron Aument. You opened up your
17 presentation, Scott, with some discussion on agency
18 goaling, who's doing well, who's not doing as well, and
19 sort of segueing into how those that are doing well are
20 doing well. And I think there's an issue of unintended
21 consequences here, too.

22 MR. DAVIDSON: Um-hum.

23 MR. AUMENT: Because even some of the mechanisms
24 you're showing that were sort of the keys to success to
25 some of the big -- the ones that had big numbers, I

1 think really there's some unintended consequences there.
2 Like the best example that comes to mind is VA's T4,
3 which is -- you know, it's like a powerball thing for
4 like a small handful of companies.

5 MR. DAVIDSON: Right.

6 MR. AUMENT: So, VA sends 15, 20 percent of
7 their annual IT spend to SMS, which is -- for the
8 existing one, there is still a veteran-owned small
9 business doing, what, 200, 300 million a year? Probably
10 more than that.

11 MR. DAVIDSON: Yeah.

12 MR. AUMENT: They have got -- about a billion
13 dollars out of the original spend has gone to them, and
14 I just don't think that -- you know, yeah you're talking
15 about like a few veteran-owned businesses doing very,
16 very well --

17 MR. DAVIDSON: Right.

18 MR. AUMENT: -- but then you have got a host of
19 people that are sitting on the outside looking in
20 because there was no real onramp for that. The same way
21 with Vets GWAC, you know --

22 UNIDENTIFIED: (Off mic) Advisor.

23 MR. AUMENT: -- companies like Microtech, all of
24 this.

25 MR. DAVIDSON: That's a different -- yeah.

1 MR. AUMENT: I mean, Microtech has been on there
2 for, like, ten years, on this, too.

3 MR. DAVIDSON: NASA SEWP.

4 MR. AUMENT: So, it's -- I find these actually
5 more in the way of barriers to small business than they
6 are, you know, any sort of a way to encourage small
7 business.

8 MR. DAVIDSON: So, the issue, as we all know, is
9 the onramp and offramp process, right? I mean, why is
10 it not being monitored and why is it not being enforced?
11 I think if you look at VA Advisors' contract, they
12 actually had set something -- they have done something
13 well. So, in the VA Advisors' contract, we know it's a
14 \$550 million service-disabled, veteran-owned, small
15 business set-aside. Twelve people had won it.

16 In the contract, it's a \$7 million NAICS code,
17 right? That's the NAICS code. When you breach that,
18 you are offramped. End of story. You are actually
19 offramped. You have to certify every year, and you have
20 to notify the contracting officer in 30 days, and you're
21 offramped that vehicle.

22 That is what I thought was a great change to see
23 that, because number one, yeah, legacywise, you'll stay
24 on one particular contract and win, but you can't
25 compete on anything else once you break that threshold.

1 The they're adjusting and trying to fix that, because
2 the T4 issue has been an incredible issue, if you think
3 about -- if you look at, you know, Systems Made Simple
4 or anybody else for that matter, they have grown to be
5 massive. Microtech, the same thing. I mean, I don't
6 know how are they are still considered -- well, I mean,
7 we know why they are still considered a small business
8 in some cases, but, you know, it hasn't been checked.

9 So, VA did a little bit more due diligence in
10 the sense that they created a NAICS code that would be
11 tolerable for a small business to be able to fund,
12 because if you think about it, if you're a small
13 business, you're under the \$7 million NAICS code, what's
14 really your ability to be able to sustain for any kind
15 of contracting?

16 How are you going to ramp up to -- let's say if
17 you get a 50-person contract, FTEs, and then carry that
18 for 90 days, you know, even if you factor it, you are
19 never going to be able to qualify for that type of
20 credit. You automatically -- you know, you are setting
21 yourself up for failure.

22 At least with VA Advisor, I liked the way they
23 did the approach in the fact that they would just take
24 you off the vehicle and offramp you when you breach that
25 as a small business, and then they will automatically

1 onramp people in order to backfill that gap. I thought
2 that was a good first step. It doesn't plug all the
3 holes, because are they doing it for the other
4 contracts? No, and they should, but with that in mind,
5 I agree with you.

6 It could set up -- it could set up a slippery
7 slope and we have seen the unintended consequences, but
8 used properly, I think it does make a major difference.
9 And we'll see what happens with VA Advisor if they
10 follow through, but it's in the contract that offramps
11 them, when they do breach that \$7 million in that kind
12 of contract, is low.

13 MS. CARSON: Scott, I'll make it quick. Because
14 it's on public record, I'll say just a few comments in
15 response, and they are good things, not critiques.

16 The coordination of effort, we addressed that
17 this morning. This was a goal of the last Chair, was to
18 have a member of this committee also be a member of the
19 Interagency Task Force, because that's where it's
20 supposed to be -- the efficiency and effectiveness of
21 the interagency efforts should come together. So, Davy
22 will be there tomorrow, right, to carry this forward and
23 have the chance to talk with GSA, and there will be
24 presentations from VA and others where what you've
25 shared today will definitely come up tomorrow.

1 Another -- on the growth and succession, those
2 are two areas where there could be -- there's a lot of
3 room for growth, and we do have programs for those, and
4 I don't necessarily want a PTAC to learn more and try
5 and be the business center. No, I would rather that we
6 were --

7 MR. DAVIDSON: I agree.

8 MS. CARSON: -- a trusted resource for them and
9 they were aware of who provides that expertise and
10 counsel to companies, recognizing that government
11 contracting is pretty specific and you get beyond the
12 capacity of certain entities rather quickly. I'll
13 acknowledge that but say that, as I would say to VAs,
14 Voc Rehab and employment counselors, I don't want to
15 train them up more. I want to them to train -- to train
16 them to refer to SBA and the resources where people can
17 get that free counseling.

18 And I think that's it for today. Thank you very
19 much for the briefing.

20 MR. DAVIDSON: Sure.

21 Oh, another question?

22 MR. FIELDER: Scott, Ed Fielder from Georgia.
23 There are two topics that -- one is one that we've been
24 dealing with for over a year, and a second topic is one
25 that we became aware of last year and are going to look

1 at more this year. I don't know if they're exactly
2 questions for you, but based on what your experience is,
3 I'd like to hear you comment on them.

4 One is, is that -- this was the topic we tried
5 to deal with last year, is this mapping the resources
6 and making the resources available, whether that's a Web
7 site that's hosted somewhere, and validating the
8 resources. I like to say there's a plethora of
9 resources for veterans to get assistance, and they range
10 from very good to very poor, and within those silos,
11 there are very poor organizations getting funding, while
12 there are very good organizations who are not getting --
13 so, that's question number one for you to comment on.

14 And the second one is, we found ourselves
15 critiquing ourselves throughout last year in the sense
16 of our focus on government contracting, and we came to
17 the realization throughout last year that the nugget in
18 the sense of commercial-available contracting -- and
19 I've heard everything from a multiple of eight to a
20 multiple of ten more -- we had some people come in and
21 talk to us about the round tables -- the different round
22 tables with Fortune 500 companies that were looking for
23 efforts to validate outside of the CVE program, validate
24 service-disabled, veteran-owned businesses.

25 Coca-Cola, who you mentioned, was one of those

1 companies, and it happens to be in my home town, so I
2 know their specific case. But could you comment on
3 those two, the plethora of resources, how to map them,
4 how to validate them? And then secondly, this -- a
5 commercial approach where most of what you presented
6 is -- is government contracting?

7 MR. DAVIDSON: Right. So, the plethora of
8 resources, I can tell you right now, I get asked that
9 question, where do I go? Where do I look? Especially
10 if I teach, like, at EVV or things of that nature.

11 I don't have a single Web site to send you to.
12 I have links that I have collected over the years that I
13 will cut, paste, and send to somebody, whether it's
14 access to capital, whether it's the different state
15 programs, whether it's -- unfortunately, we need a
16 solution. Without a doubt, there needs to be a single
17 point of contact, you know, if -- not a single point of
18 contact, but a single point -- page where you list all
19 the resources that are available, and they're vetted,
20 right?

21 I mean, it's not like a Wikipedia-type thing.
22 It's something that is a vetted source where these are
23 actual legitimate sources of -- a nonprofit that has
24 good ratings, there are, you know, university programs,
25 chambers of commerce, things of that nature, that

1 specifically give you a description of where they need
2 to go. That doesn't exist today.

3 And it's unfortunate, because there is so much
4 information, and it would just take time to get that
5 together, and then somebody has to maintain it. So,
6 yes, I mean, there is a plethora. There's some bad
7 actors in the space, which we know, that can put up a
8 nice Web site in a matter of minutes and give bad advice
9 and cause issues, and I have unfortunately run across
10 those people in my time, and I think if it's -- from
11 a -- if it's from a federal body, for that matter, I
12 think it adds credence -- it -- you know, it gives it --
13 it basically -- it will validate something.

14 If that could be done -- SBA, of course --
15 putting up a specific veteran page where we go one-stop
16 shop. It just needs to be done. I wish -- I don't have
17 an answer as to where it exists. I don't -- I haven't
18 found it yet.

19 Commercial, so that is actually -- that's a
20 great question. It's one of the reasons why we went to
21 Dun & Bradstreet, because they actually have access to
22 every commercial business record, and they know who
23 veteran businesses are through internal surveys, bank
24 information, things of that nature.

25 You're correct on that number. I don't know if

1 I'm allowed to give that number in the record, but I
2 have spoken with them, and there's a number that is
3 pretty significant as far as veteran businesses that are
4 not gov-con-related, and it dwarfs gov-con-related
5 businesses, dwarfs, I guess that's the only word I would
6 say. So, we could talk about that offline.

7 But, yeah, just to let you know, that was the
8 driving force behind why we looked at that particular
9 model, because we know that there is the benefit, and
10 why Coca-Cola, Home Depot, you know, people like that
11 are saying, well, we need these resources. I could care
12 less about gov-con. You know, they don't look at
13 anything like that.

14 So, that's actually Dun & Bradstreet's approach.
15 They're not so much -- they're interested in gov-con,
16 but there is a major commercial component in what
17 they're looking to do in this space, especially with
18 veterans, because they know it exists.

19 They want to know about the barbershop. They
20 want to know about the mechanic. They want to know
21 about the person who owns a restaurant. They want to
22 know about -- that's who -- that's their market, because
23 gov-con is going to be that compared to everything else,
24 and where do they make their money is -- because these
25 people have to go get business loans, they have to go do

1 that, so they are tracking all that information, because
2 Dun & Bradstreet works at every bank. They have to,
3 right? I mean, that's where they get their credit
4 scores from and everything else and they influence
5 financial decision-making when it comes to a loan.

6 So, yes, there is a major push, commercial. It
7 dwarfs the gov-con sector, and it's something that we
8 overlook because what are the commercial programs that
9 it -- you know, besides, the SBA loan programs, you
10 know, they're great, but what else incentivises veteran
11 businesses who are not in the gov-con space to come out
12 and declare themselves as that?

13 And I know Dun & Bradstreet does have some
14 programs in place and there are other things that they
15 are developing, you know, with us that will -- they have
16 a veteran certification program now for non-gov-con
17 businesses that allow them to go through a process to
18 declare that they are -- and it's free of charge,
19 actually, they don't charge anybody -- but it goes on
20 their permanent record and they can identify them that
21 way, but they have an extraordinary amount of businesses
22 that actually have gone through that that are
23 commercial-related businesses, nothing but gov-con, and
24 they have gone through the process of becoming
25 certified, and that's how they identify them. They get

1 like a sticker if they want to put it on their business
2 or anything like that, but there is efforts on the
3 commercial side in order to tackle that. But it's --
4 we've got to -- we're going in that direction, but it's
5 got a long way to go.

6 MR. PHIPPS: I am going to make one last
7 comment, because we have to get to the next speaker, and
8 we have kind of gone into our break time.

9 So, just a comment kind of to add, Craig Heilman
10 gave us a brief during the last committee meeting for
11 the report that Barb mentioned. I saw some of the data
12 that Scott got was from that SBA report that's going to
13 come out that addresses resources and a lot of issues
14 that Scott is going to present today. So, when we see
15 that report, it will probably give much more insight to
16 some of these issues.

17 That being said, does anybody need to take a
18 break or can we go right into the next speaker? If you
19 need to take a break, a show of hands? Okay, we will
20 take a quick five-minute break, and we will reconvene in
21 five minutes.

22 (A brief recess was taken.)

23 MR. PHIPPS: Okay, everybody. We're going to
24 get started. I'd like to introduce Diz Locario from
25 Venable. He's going to be addressing legal issues

1 facing veteran businesses.

2 MR. LOCARIO: Thanks, Mike. And thanks,
3 everyone, for your time this afternoon. I appreciate
4 the invite to be before you today.

5 We're going to go through a number of legal
6 issues. We can't go through all the legal issues in one
7 hour, but we'll go through some of them. But really
8 quickly, I'm with the law firm of Venable based here in
9 Washington, D.C. Venable is a national firm. We've got
10 offices all over the country, more than 600 attorneys.
11 And we do really a full range of services.

12 But with respect to Government contracts and
13 small business in general, or more specifically, we
14 really cover the range of issues and services for
15 Government contractors. We represent a number of small
16 businesses in all sorts of issues ranging from, you
17 know, becoming a Government contractor to litigating
18 against the Government, disputes or protests, things
19 like that. So there's some information in the slides.
20 But let's get on to the agenda.

21 The agenda, I've got a couple items that we'll
22 touch on specifically and then some additional issues
23 which are kind of a catch-all of a number of different
24 things on my mind and on veteran businesses' minds. I
25 spoke actually with a number of my clients as I put

1 these slides together, and I was actually at an
2 organization event yesterday where there were a few
3 veteran businesses there. And I was talking with them
4 as well about some of these issues. And these issues
5 are definitely at the fore of their mind.

6 The first one is kind of a very specific
7 issue, but one that has been circulating within the
8 small business community for quite some time now. It's
9 about reverse auctions. For those of you not aware what
10 a reverse auction is, essentially it's a procedure where
11 the Government can go and get services starting at a
12 price and then just pushing the price down and down and
13 down.

14 Now, that's great from a Government
15 perspective because it pushes the price down and down
16 and down and down. The problem from a veteran or a
17 small business perspective is that it really squelches
18 out small business. I mean, small businesses are not in
19 a position to be able to, you know, cut their margins
20 much more than they would in a bid process where folks
21 give their best shot, but they're not continually
22 pushing down. It's as though -- in the regular bidding
23 process, it's as though you went through six, seven
24 BAFOs where every time you're being asked to sharpen
25 your pencil further. And at some point small businesses

1 just can't do it.

2 Larger businesses, they have the wherewithal
3 to be able to say, well, you know, on this one we'll be
4 okay, because market entry and we'll get better on the
5 next one. So it creates an environment where big
6 businesses can buy in and the small businesses are
7 pushed out.

8 It also squelches innovation to a great degree
9 because what you're doing is, again, you're looking for
10 the lowest price. Now, these proposals may be set up as
11 a best value. But if the main focal point of a reverse
12 auction is the price, well then it really converts to
13 what we call an LPTA, low price technically acceptable.
14 And everyone is looked at equally in terms of their
15 ability, but the bottom line is the price.

16 So, it really kind of distorts the whole point
17 of the procurement process. Why are we here? Well, you
18 know, reverse auctions are easy. And, again, it saves
19 the taxpayer money. So I see the Government's
20 perspective in that. But there really needs to be some
21 thought put into how these are used and when they're
22 used. And that's, you know, one of the issues that I
23 want to just talk about a little bit, is, you know, what
24 is -- what is the best way to use that tool?

25 Well, first of all, there needs to be some

1 education, particularly to small businesses, on how to
2 get engaged in these, how to work this. Because a lot
3 of times small businesses, when they are not that
4 experienced in Government contracting, their first offer
5 is their best offer.

6 Well, when you're going against behemoth
7 Government contractors who are going after the same
8 work, they know that their first offer, especially in a
9 reverse auction, is only their first offer. It's not
10 their last offer. And so they're not going in with
11 their lowest offer, whereas that small business is going
12 in early with a very low offer, and then they easily get
13 passed up by the other offerors.

14 So there needs to be some education and some
15 training in that regard. But there also needs to be
16 some education and training on the Government side,
17 right? So what is the Government exactly? What is
18 their goal here? Is their goal to save every last
19 dollar for the taxpayer? I understand that goal.
20 However, the Government does need to work in a little
21 bit broader, kind of not lose the forest for the trees
22 perspective.

23 Veteran businesses, small businesses bring
24 forward lots of innovation and utility to the
25 Government. Otherwise, we have a homogenized group of

1 contractors with no diversity among their thoughts. And
2 having small businesses, yeah, you may pay a little bit
3 more, but for small businesses to be engaged and
4 involved in the federal contracting process is
5 absolutely critical to the growth of industry.

6 And so, you know, contracting officers need to
7 say, okay, what is it that we're procuring? Are we
8 procuring a widget or are we procuring a thought process
9 here or are we procuring a service? If you're procuring
10 pencils, okay, fine, maybe that is something that is
11 better suited for reverse auction. But if you're
12 procuring a program manager or some type of service or
13 some type of integrated service, you really need to
14 think through what it is you're trying to get out of
15 this procurement. And contracting officers need to be
16 pushed to justify why to use a reverse auction.

17 For instance, they need to start at a market
18 price. Is the Government really looking to buy things
19 at below market price? Is the Government really looking
20 to buy things at below cost? Because big businesses, in
21 order to get the Government business, will buy in at
22 below cost because they know they'll get well down the
23 road. They may get well through this contract through
24 change orders, or they may get well with other contracts
25 down the road. Again, small businesses are not as savvy

1 to think, oh, well, we'll just file a bunch of change
2 orders on this contract and we'll get well.

3 So the big businesses, they'll buy in and the
4 Government may get something on the cheap at the outset,
5 but at the end of the day, if the Government is saving a
6 dime here, they may be paying out quite a bit more down
7 the road because those big businesses are in the
8 business of making money. So eventually they will get
9 theirs at the cost of small business entrepreneurs.

10 So it's critical that contracting officers be
11 -- you know, that some reins be put on this, that they
12 have to determine reasonable market pricing and probably
13 not allow those rates to go below that.

14 Now, what that does is everyone goes to that
15 bottom rate, whatever that might be, let's say it's \$100
16 for sake of example. Now, that market -- that market
17 rate might not -- that fair market price may not be
18 public. So, A, the Government knows it. And if
19 everyone hits it, let's say five out of the 10 bidders
20 hit it, well then you have a playing field that actually
21 looks at something other than price. Now we're looking
22 at best value. You're looking at what innovation, what
23 expertise, what other value add is the -- are the
24 contractors bringing?

25 So if you have five businesses -- let's say

1 you started at 10, you have five businesses that hit
2 that market price of \$100, now you're looking at those
3 five businesses. Some of those still could be small.
4 And those small businesses can differentiate themselves
5 because of their experience, their expertise. And so
6 you're now bringing it back to a value-based judgment
7 and not an LPTA or low price, technically acceptable.

8 So there is actually a really good solution.
9 But, again, there needs to be changes to force
10 contracting officers to do that. Because right now it's
11 just way too simple for them just to go award it to the
12 lowest price. And what's that doing? It's pushing out
13 the small businesses and the veteran-owned small
14 businesses. So one of the issues is that the FAR needs
15 to kind of catch up with the times here on reverse
16 auctions.

17 All right.

18 MR. FIELDER: Wait. While you're still on --

19 MR. LOCARIO: Oh, yeah, please. Absolutely.

20 MR. FIELDER: Ed Fielder, Georgia. I was
21 about to ask the question and then you dropped the
22 acronym right at the very end. I refer to low price
23 technically acceptable as the close cousin to reverse
24 auction.

25 DEZ LOCARIO: Yeah.

1 MR. FIELDER: But it is different. But the
2 consequences are the same.

3 DIZ LOCARIO: The same.

4 ED FIELDER: Could you just be more specific
5 and comment on that, because we're seeing more and more
6 of them, and it seems to be -- and this is a -- if you
7 will, my personal opinion -- but it seems to be a
8 shortcut for the contract -- particularly Government
9 contracting officers to literally make quick decisions
10 that are not protestable because just about everybody is
11 technically qualified or technically acceptable, and so
12 they can go right to the low price.

13 And we find even small businesses competing
14 against small businesses on set-asides that the business
15 that wins can't do it for the price that they're doing
16 it, and it's -- in many cases, I won't say in some
17 cases, but in many cases fail.

18 DIZ LOCARIO: Right. And unfortunately I
19 think the protest community and the GAO decisions
20 sometimes are hit or miss on that last point you made,
21 which is, you know, if you protest and you say, look,
22 this is a completely unreasonable price, the Government
23 should have never awarded this contract for this price,
24 it's really hit or miss at GAO whether you're going to
25 get an attorney that's going to give that any

1 appreciable review or say, well, the agency made the
2 best judgment, and even though they're 79 percent
3 cheaper than everyone else, that was the agency's
4 decision.

5 Well, come on. You have a range of people at
6 one number and you have this really low outlier, and
7 that's going to be reasonable? So we do see that issue
8 quite a bit.

9 But going back to reverse auction, LPTA, I
10 mean, LPTA is -- essentially it's a reverse auction not
11 in the reverse auction process. So a reverse auction is
12 a process. An LPTA is a criteria within the typical RFP
13 process. But they do -- to your point, they get to the
14 exact same result, which is squeezing out innovation,
15 squeezing out value add, because I can get a ham
16 sandwich technically acceptable, but what else am I
17 going to get out of that?

18 Well, the Government is going to get nothing
19 else out of that. They're going to get exactly what
20 they say they're going to get and nothing more. And
21 that's where small businesses have their competitive
22 advantage. Because they're innovative, they're nimble,
23 they're flexible, and they can do things that large
24 businesses cannot necessarily do on the drop of a hat,
25 but they're never going to have the opportunity because

1 they can't get in and buy low.

2 So, yeah, but great point. Any other
3 questions. Yes?

4 MR. LEGHORN: Davy Leghorn with American
5 Legion. I just have a comment to make on reverse
6 auctions. One of the things that we're finding is that
7 a lot of small businesses don't know that the people
8 that run the reverse auctions charge you 3 percent. And
9 they -- they always talk about it costs the Federal
10 Government nothing, but it's actually -- the small
11 business has to build the cost into what they bid. And
12 unfortunately a lot of them aren't doing it.

13 And what -- what happens is it causes an
14 adverse relationship between them and the Government
15 because they're coming in, having to pay that 3 percent,
16 and I mean, they're just hating life right off the bat.
17 That's what it comes down to. And they don't like
18 starting to work for an agency in the red.

19 DIZ LOCARIO: No. I mean, that's exactly
20 right. I mean, the reverse auction has not done
21 anything positive for the partnership. And we were just
22 talking during the break about the importance of a
23 partnership between contractors and the Federal
24 Government, that it's an -- it doesn't need to be
25 adversarial. And reverse auctions -- typically

1 adversarial happens once you're disputing a contract, at
2 least you got the contract and you have some money coming
3 in the door. Now we're talking about adversarial
4 process right out of the gate. Right out of the gate
5 you're -- the Government is dinging you for every dollar
6 before you even won the contract.

7 And to your point on the 3 percent, yeah, I
8 mean, that fee is, you know, eaten typically by the
9 small business, because going back to education, they
10 don't recognize that, whereas, again, the large
11 businesses do. They build it in, but the small business
12 doesn't build it in. So, yeah, no, that's a good point.

13 Okay. I'll move on to the next topic. This
14 -- the VA -- the Veterans Affairs Verification Program.
15 So typically -- or not typically. So one of the issues
16 -- and this dates back again -- a lot of these issues
17 are small business issues in general. But we're looking
18 in the specific context of a veteran small business or
19 service-disabled.

20 So the VA has their own certification program
21 separate from the SBA. And we're going to talk a little
22 bit about the problems between those two systems on the
23 next topic. But with respect to -- particularly to the
24 VA Program, there was concern, and in 2013 GAO put out a
25 report. There was concern that many veteran-owned

1 businesses that were being certified by the VA were not,
2 in fact, veteran-owned businesses. And that created a
3 lot of concern.

4 And so in 2015 -- whoops. I'm sorry, slides
5 here. I'm way off. Apologies. No, I just needed to
6 catch up. Okay.

7 So in 2015, the GAO issued a report looking
8 back after their recommendations from 2013. The 2013
9 recommendations went to a number of different things,
10 but essentially they said, look, it's taking too long
11 and the results are not good, the results are you're not
12 doing a good enough job. So those are the bottom lines.

13 2015, the GAO by and large had positive
14 results on their -- on the VA's progress since 2013,
15 which was they dropped the time -- the processing time
16 to 85 -- from 85 days to 56 days. So that was -- that
17 was solid. They closed 96 percent of their internal
18 audit recommendations. They conducted post-verification
19 sites on 606 firms, verifying the accuracy.

20 So overall it looks like the VA program is
21 moving in the right direction. But the bottom line is
22 it's still a complex process for veterans. It's one
23 that's not well understood or well known. And as we're
24 going to talk about, because you have a different
25 program with the SBA, what's the utility? What's the

1 utility of two different programs with completely
2 different systems? And we're also going to talk about
3 and I'm going to touch on the fact that they're now
4 changing.

5 So the VA program is actually modifying its
6 requirements for what qualifies one as a veteran-owned
7 business. The SBA is going to have a disparate
8 structure. So you're going to have companies that under
9 one regime is considered a veteran-owned business, and
10 then another regime is not a veteran-owned business.

11 That creates a significant problem. And
12 that's what we'll go into here. So the problem here is
13 that the VA, like I said, you go through an application
14 process and they verify you. It's an affirmative
15 certification of being a veteran owner,
16 service-disabled, veteran-owned business.

17 On the small business side, it's a
18 self-certification. Most of the various socio-economic
19 classes under the small business regime are
20 self-certification, woman-owned, although there now is a
21 certification process. But traditionally 8As and
22 HUBZones are the ones that you had to get certification.
23 All the others are self-certifying and it's
24 self-regulating. You can get protested that you're not,
25 in fact, small. You can protest that you're not, in

1 fact, a veteran business, a woman-owned business,
2 whatever it might be. And it's self-regulating.

3 But now you've got a program at the VA where
4 they're going to certify. You've got the VA that has
5 self-certifying. But they're now changing the rules at
6 the VA -- to changing the two key factors, which is
7 ownership and control. So to be a veteran-owned
8 business and to be an SDVOSB, you have to be 51 percent
9 owned by a veteran or a service-disabled veteran, okay,
10 and controlled by that veteran or service-disabled
11 veteran, okay, or multiple veterans or service-disabled
12 veterans.

13 That's how it's always been under the SBA.
14 That's how it's been under the VA. Now the VA is
15 opening up the ownership issue a little bit. And
16 there's a good reason for it and I understand that
17 completely. And I don't want to exclude people from
18 being within this category. There were issues related
19 to capital that veterans needed additional capital to
20 get their company going.

21 Well, in order to get that capital, they give
22 equity of the company. Well, when you give equity of a
23 company to someone else, now you have affiliation
24 issues. Are you affiliated with the person that holds
25 the equity? Does that affiliation cause you not to be

1 small any more? So those issues are the issues they're
2 trying to address here.

3 But does it make sense to not address them at
4 the SBA? Because what you're going to end up, as I
5 mentioned earlier, you're going to have a group of
6 veteran-owned businesses that qualified under one regime
7 but don't qualify under the other regime. When you look
8 at things like the System for Award Management and other
9 reps and certs and contracts, those are statements to
10 the Federal Government, those are representations and
11 certifications upon which you're going to get awarded a
12 contract.

13 We spend an inordinate amount of time
14 unfortunately defending contractors who certify
15 inaccurately or make what the Government says are false
16 statements. Those have major repercussions, both civil
17 and criminal. And we're putting the veterans right in
18 the middle of that, because they're going to have these
19 two programs that don't reconcile. And that, I think,
20 is going to be a big issue in the next few years once
21 these regs go into effect, because you're going to have
22 this group of veterans that don't really appreciate or
23 recognize the fact that in this one group they're a
24 veteran; in this other they're not.

25 And I don't think SAM even addresses that. So

1 they're going to put in SAM that they're a veteran-owned
2 small business. Then they're going to win a contract
3 over at GSA, and GSA is considering it to be a
4 veteran-owned award. And they're not. And someone else
5 is going to come along and say, hey, this veteran is not
6 a veteran they're going to file what's called a qui-tam,
7 which is essentially a False Claims Act case, against
8 that veteran and drag them into court where they're
9 going to deal with treble damages and all sorts of
10 problems.

11 So we've created a system. There's just so
12 much bureaucracy that it's creating additional problems.
13 And I guess my thought is we've got to think of a way to
14 streamline this. Whether it's the SBA or the VA, the
15 criteria has got to be the same. Because if you have
16 this varying criteria, you're putting these veterans
17 right smack dab in the middle of their problem that we
18 all created. So it's definitely an issue I think that's
19 going to be coming.

20 Any comments? Yes?

21 MR. MCADAMS: Rich McAdams from Huntsville,
22 Alabama. Has there been -- I thought I had heard that
23 there was some move to make one or the other the
24 official federal Government certification program for
25 service-disabled.

1 MR. LOCARIO: Well, so the VA is the official
2 certification program. But you can still self-certify
3 under the SBA program.

4 MR. MCADAMS: Okay. Because there is only
5 one --

6 MR. LOCARIO: Right.

7 MR. MCADAMS: -- certification.

8 DIZ LOCARIO: And so when -- you know, when a
9 large business goes to a subcontractor, are they going
10 to say, are you a certified -- VA certified or are you
11 just certified? Well, I don't know how I'd interpret
12 that other than if you said I was VA. But if you just
13 said are you a certified veteran, yeah, I am, because
14 under the SBA I can self-certify.

15 And then in the federal context, I don't
16 think, A, all the agencies understand the nuances of
17 this, especially the ones that are a little disconnected
18 from it. The SBA and the VA, putting those agencies
19 aside, does GSA, does DOD, do all the other alphabet
20 soups understand this? Are they going to amend their
21 reps and certs? Is the FAR going to amend its reps and
22 certs to account for the fact that you can be a
23 VA-certified vet but not an SBA-certified vet? It just
24 creates a whole lot of problems.

25 MR. GARCIA: John Garcia. But to complicate

1 that even further is that you have some states that are
2 certifying at the state level. And so Illinois, for
3 example --

4 DIZ LOCARIO: Yeah.

5 JOHN GARCIA: -- I could be certified as a
6 service-disabled veteran-owned company and secure a
7 state contract, but I can't do that with the VA.

8 DIZ LOCARIO: No. I mean, and then -- yeah,
9 if you want to --

10 JOHN GARCIA: So my personal opinion has been,
11 and I've shared it, is that the states that I process --
12 well, process my claim as a service-disabled vet,
13 they're the first to know that I'm a service-disabled
14 vet. So I just believe the states ought to be
15 certifying that I'm a service-disabled vet, because
16 they're going to have my proof of certification from the
17 VA once I go through my service agency or officer and I
18 get my certification from the VA.

19 All I have to do is present that to the state
20 and the state certifies me as a service-disabled vet.
21 And a lot of states are beginning to do that because of
22 the problems that have been going on with the VA. But
23 there's this constant bickering going on at who is the
24 official certifier. So the VA doesn't even recognize
25 the state certification.

1 DIZ LOCARIO: No, not at all, no. I mean,
2 that's a whole other ball of wax, which is the interplay
3 between state programs and the federal programs. And
4 the Federal Government is not going to recognize a state
5 program. And many states just try to piggy-back off the
6 federal programs, but they either do it poorly or they
7 lag, and in other ways they try to be innovative and do
8 it themselves. And that's great and it's a laudable,
9 but it does create more problems.

10 And, again, to Scott's point, you know, having
11 a resource for veterans to go consult with all of this
12 information would be key because veterans just -- you
13 know, they know what they want to do this stuff is, you
14 know -- I get paid every day to do this. That's why I
15 know it. But not everyone is like that. And so it's
16 hard to ask people to really understand the nuances of
17 all this.

18 MR. GARCIA: And that's an issue I think that
19 this committee needs to really look at, address, is that
20 how do we streamline that to make it easier for that
21 service-disabled veteran company? Because as we're
22 talking here at the strategic level, it's the tactical
23 level that's lacking. And that's -- how do you take it
24 down to a tactical level for certification?

25 MR. FIELDER: Ed Fielder, Georgia. Partly to

1 respond to Rich and then what you just talked about,
2 John. I think what gets lost in the fog of this is that
3 the CVE program was meant for Vet First only, as in it
4 only applies to the VA. But as our friends from the VA
5 like to say, it's the platinum standard amongst
6 certification programs, of which the SBA's policy and
7 long-standing policy, which we all agree with is --
8 well, I can't say we all agree -- I agree with, which is
9 self-certification.

10 And what gets clouded in this is that risk --
11 averse Government contracting officers defer to that CVE
12 rating that has nothing to do with that particular
13 agency. Rich just tried to clear it up again a little
14 bit. But that's what we've been dealing with. And last
15 year we had the VA come in and give us an update on
16 their CVE program. And that's where I got the term
17 "platinum standard." But we also brought in a couple of
18 certification groups.

19 And, frankly, I think we -- at least I landed
20 on the fact that self-certification is the correct
21 platform right now. But what's clouding it is this
22 thing -- this CVE program was only meant for the VA.
23 And it's broadened this approach and it's gotten very
24 large. And I think if you ask the average vet business
25 owner about doing business with the Federal Government,

1 he's going to say I need that CVE certification to be
2 able to do that.

3 MR. LOCARIO: Yeah. I mean, I would concur.
4 I mean, I think the self-certification process has a lot
5 of benefits. Timing, again, going back to the GAO
6 report, I mean, we're talking -- even though there's
7 been improvements from 85 days to 56 days, we're still
8 talking about two months to get the VA to process an
9 application.

10 When the veteran is the sole owner, he knows
11 he's a vet, or he knows he qualifies under the SDVOSB
12 program, why not let him start right away? You can bet
13 your bottom dollar that if he wins a contract and
14 someone else has evidence that he's not a veteran or
15 he's not qualified, they're going to make that known.
16 And the self-policing aspect of it works really well.

17 And so the idea of creating this entire
18 infrastructure just to do this, it's just -- you know,
19 it just creates additional hurdles, additional problems,
20 because you have disharmony among all the various, you
21 know, agencies at issue here, both state, federal, you
22 know, local. And so the self-process -- the
23 self-certifying process just really does make a whole
24 lot of sense in that regard.

25 MR. MCADAMS: Rich McAdams again. I agree

1 with you completely. But as a service-disabled owner, I
2 know the first question out of the top 10 contractors
3 mouth when you go ask them, are you certified, you know,
4 and they mean the CVE --

5 MR. LOCARIO: Exactly.

6 MR. MCADAMS: -- they don't mean the --

7 MR. LOCARIO: But that's the problem with
8 having the CVE program.

9 MR. MCADAMS: Correct.

10 MR. LOCARIO: Is it's not an optional program
11 at times. What happens ultimately is it's, okay, great,
12 it starts as Vets First --

13 MR. MCADAMS: It becomes the de facto.

14 MR. LOCARIO: Exactly. Because everyone is so
15 risk adverse.

16 MR. MCADAMS: Because the KO who wants to
17 avoid the possibility of a protest and dragging out his
18 procurement for another six or nine months wants to be
19 risk-adverse, and --

20 DIZ LOCARIO: Well, and even the primes,
21 there's -- you know, doing their due diligence, well,
22 you know, self-certification doesn't make us feel as
23 good as if you had CVEs. So now it's a de facto
24 requirement where it was never intended to do that. But
25 it essentially has become that. Absolutely.

1 Okay. Now, let's talk about a case that we're
2 all -- at least I'm keeping an eye on this year. The
3 status of the Veterans First Program.

4 So not only is the CVE created for Vets First,
5 the VA doesn't even follow Vets First. So, I mean,
6 okay. So here's the program. The VA is required to go
7 get veteran participation. The VA decides, well, we hit
8 our goals, we're good, now we can just go out and
9 procure from anyone. We don't need to do any rule of
10 two, we don't need to look to see if veterans can
11 fulfill this order, regardless of whether there's even a
12 cost savings or not. That's not even an issue.

13 As soon as the VA got to that goal, hands off,
14 Veterans First is no more. Is that really what was
15 intended when Congress passed that? I don't think so.

16 So essentially what happened at the Federal
17 Circuit is they agreed with the Government, that as soon
18 as they hit their requirement, they had no requirements
19 under Vets First. So that's now been taken to the
20 Supreme Court.

21 So we'll see what the Supreme Court says about
22 Kingdomware. I don't know if it looks good. Maybe
23 there will be some reaction. Oftentimes when a decision
24 comes out of the Supreme Court that's not the intended
25 result, there's changes legislatively to fix that --

1 whatever that glitch was.

2 But at the end of the day, if the VA is not
3 required to use veterans, what kind of example is that?
4 What example is that setting for veteran-owned
5 businesses, that they can't even get their own agency,
6 the one that created the CVE Program, this de facto
7 certification now, that they're not even willing to go
8 beyond their basic requirement to use veterans? It just
9 creates a whole atmosphere.

10 Why are the other agencies going to fall into
11 line on that? This case is frankly somewhat of an
12 embarrassment to the VA, the fact that it's gotten this
13 far and now it's going to the Supreme Court for review.
14 So I don't know if there's any other questions on that.

15 So I have a few other topics. I don't really
16 have slides on it. But these topics are extremely
17 important to me.

18 The failure to properly identify qualified
19 small businesses. Okay. So this is broader than
20 veterans. But essentially there is absolutely -- you
21 can go to FedBizOps every day and see open solicitations
22 for work you know small -- I could go out there right
23 now and find two small businesses that could satisfy
24 that requirement. Is it set aside? No. Why?
25 Government in action? I'm not sure what it is.

1 But there are opportunities every single day
2 that the rule of two is being ignored, whether it's a
3 Veterans First rule of two or just a small business rule
4 of two. That is an absolute travesty. That's what
5 small business -- I mean, those rules are put in place
6 for small business and they're not being followed.

7 Now, you can protest it. That's not really
8 going to get you on the good side of your agency, of
9 your customer. So we generally -- you know, most small
10 businesses generally, A, do they have the resources to
11 protest, and, B, do they want to do that because a lot
12 of times they're not diversified in their client base.
13 They do work for DHS, they do work for DHS. They can't
14 go, you know, poke the dog.

15 So it's kind of self-perpetuating because
16 they're not willing to protest those issues and they're
17 going to go win it and they'll try to, you know, make
18 sure that their customer knows them and all those
19 different relationship issues. But they're not going to
20 push for the rule of two and the set-aside.

21 And that's something that I think there needs
22 to be greater accountability at the contracting officer
23 level to go out and do some market survey, to look
24 what's going on out there and decide, okay, yes, this
25 can be satisfied.

1 Now, this goes into the next issue, which is
2 acquisition strategies. And number one on that list
3 every year is bundling, because the Government knows
4 they've got this rule of two. So the more savvy
5 contracting offices who are aware of the rule of two
6 say, Well, we'll just add this and we'll add that and
7 we'll just make it one big bundle.

8 Then that pushes out the small business or the
9 veteran-owned small business from participating, and
10 they have to go in as a sub as opposed to being a prime.

11 So, you know, the idea of curtailing bundling,
12 strategic sourcing is a great buzz word around town,
13 going to save the Government lots of money. But, again,
14 are we trying to save every bottom dollar? Are we
15 trying to look, you know, at the forest for the trees
16 here?

17 There's got to be a push to use small
18 business. That's where the innovation comes from. If
19 you go out and you talk to all the big defense
20 contractors, Northrop, Lockheed, whoever you want to
21 talk to, all of them shake the bushes for small
22 businesses. They look for small business partners.

23 Now, they're required to in many ways, but in
24 many, many instances they do it because, A, the same
25 reasons the Government should pay more for it. They're

1 more nimble, they're more flexible, and they innovate.
2 The ideas that come from small business have to be
3 sponsored. They have to be fostered. And if you have
4 to pay a little bit more up front to keep developing
5 that work force and developing that entrepreneurship,
6 then you've got to do it.

7 So the idea of strategic sourcing every five
8 years, oh, let's come around and let's, you know, create
9 these initiatives to save taxpayer dollars. And, I
10 mean, Scott put out that list of all those different
11 GWACs that are veteran focused. Well, you know, why are
12 there so many GWACs to start with? Why do you have 17
13 different IT GWACs? I mean, let's be strategic,
14 Government. Let's have one agency, have one GWAC for
15 IT, everyone coming out there.

16 Why is GSA competing with NASA, who's
17 competing with DHS? I mean, that doesn't help small
18 businesses. Small businesses now have to go and get on
19 17 different vehicles and then hope for work. That
20 doesn't help the small business. That's a lot of
21 administrative work both within the Government and
22 outside the Government. That could all be streamlined
23 and saved. So those are -- you know, these issues I
24 think are just enormously important.

25 This one -- and this goes somewhat against my

1 practice. So I represent a lot of small businesses, but
2 I represent some businesses that are not small. And,
3 you know, every large business is required to have
4 subcontracting plans. But those subcontracting plans,
5 first of all, sometimes the agency I think -- agency
6 approval is required, you know, in those cases.
7 Sometimes those approvals, I think, are a bit
8 disingenuous. Because if you put in a right number,
9 whether you actually have a plan to get to that number
10 is irrelevant. You just need to have the right number
11 there.

12 I've seen many good large businesses try to do
13 the right thing. Okay, we've got .01 spend in this
14 category right now, but over a five-year period if we
15 can get that up to 3 percent, but that's going to take
16 us time. We can't just do it in one year. Whereas your
17 plan is never going to get approved if in year one
18 you're saying you're going to do half a percent. You'll
19 never get your plan approved. So you've got to go
20 straight to that 3 percent or that 5 percent. And
21 that's just -- that just doesn't make sense. Let's be
22 practical and pragmatic about it.

23 Now, the alternative is that so what is --
24 what is being done when contractors don't exercise good
25 faith to meet those plans? Nothing. Yeah, exactly. I

1 don't know. I've never heard of it. I mean, there's
2 liquidated damages clauses. There's all kinds of
3 remedies. I've never seen -- once have I heard of
4 anyone, you know, holding anyone to the mat.

5 Now, all my clients, they all do good faith
6 effort. But, you know, I can't say that for everyone.
7 So I think that's a big issue and an area that can be
8 improved without a lot of changes to regulations or
9 rules. Let's just enforce what's out there.

10 This bullet, near and dear, federal staffing
11 and education. So there is a major, major dearth of
12 talent in the Federal Government in acquisition. Scott
13 talked about it. You know, a lot of agencies don't even
14 have, you know, the right procurement personnel in
15 place. The OSBDUs aren't even there. And so we don't
16 have -- vettors don't have the resources or the
17 assistance to really take the next step, to move it
18 along.

19 They're trying to do everything on their own
20 without any guidance, without any assistance. And, you
21 know, the executive order you were pointing out that was
22 requiring this, I've talked to many Government officials
23 that say, yeah, those executive orders are great,
24 there's never any money that comes with them. There's
25 no appropriations that come with the executive orders.

1 Just a new requirement for us to do, but the same amount
2 of people here with the agency to do it.

3 So, you know, there's got to be a push to get
4 some more funds for the agencies to hire and to retain
5 and train, you know, their acquisition work force. And
6 I know there's a huge turnover now. But there's a
7 direct correlation between good contracting officers and
8 good contract officials and the contracting community
9 with which they serve. You're going to get far better
10 service, far better results, and a lot less expensive if
11 you have good communication and working -- that
12 partnership I'm talking about.

13 And then my last point is regulating of small
14 businesses. So we talked a little bit about it, kind of
15 the bureaucracy, the disparate systems, the constant
16 changes to regulations, the increase in regulations. I
17 actually know several companies and they're not even
18 small. I mean, they're considering exiting federal
19 contracting because it's just getting to be too much.
20 There's too much, and the Government is pushing, you
21 know, prices down, pushing margins down, and there's
22 just too much added.

23 There's too many requirements that come into
24 it. Even things that are supposed to be simple, the GSA
25 is supposed to be -- the schedules are supposed to take

1 your commercial practices and apply it to the
2 Government. But the Government is harnessing the
3 commercial sector, the competition, all of the good
4 things that come from the commercial environment for
5 commercial products and apply it to the Government.

6 But GSA has made that a mess. They have --
7 and part of it, I think, is the staffing and education
8 is that the contracting officers have far too many
9 cases, far too many files, and they can't spend the real
10 time it takes to, A, educate their contractors on what
11 they need to be doing, and, B, work with them -- going
12 back to the point of contractors CYAing themselves --
13 it's easier to simply take the highest standard and
14 apply it to everyone, which doesn't work for anyone,
15 than it is to say, okay, here's your situation, here's
16 your industry and here's how we're going to structure
17 it.

18 You know, IGs come in and give them the riot
19 act and they get, you know, written up for that.
20 There's just so much bureaucracy that it's starting, I
21 think, really to kill the contracting community. And so
22 I think that, you know, at the end of the day I'm seeing
23 even large businesses kind of crumpling under the weight
24 of all these various regulations and things.

25 Any questions? I have no idea what time it

1 is. JOHN GARCIA: John Garcia. I just want to
2 thank you. I think it's extremely thorough what you are
3 presenting and I think you're hitting this nail on the
4 head of what we're all having to deal with, the SBA as
5 well as the VA.

6 You've outlined your issues. Have you put
7 together any types of recommendations that maybe this
8 committee could review and look at, maybe present --

9 DIZ LOCARIO: I haven't. I'd be happy to.
10 I'd be happy to do so. I mean, some of them I realize
11 are a little bit pie in the sky, but --

12 JOHN GARCIA: No. But I think you're hitting
13 it right on. Second, and just a personal question, are
14 you a veteran?

15 DIZ LOCARIO: I'm not, no.

16 JOHN GARCIA: You've got some good vet speak.
17 I think we're all able to understand what you're talking
18 about.

19 DIZ LOCARIO: Good. Glad to --

20 JOHN GARCIA: But -- and I think that's
21 important when we're putting something together that's
22 got vet speak, as you know what I'm talking about.

23 DIZ LOCARIO: I work with Scott. I'm a friend
24 of veterans.

25 JOHN GARCIA: You've educated him pretty good

1 then. I just think what you're presenting is right on.
2 It would be helpful to veteran and small businesses
3 because we're all experiencing that and we're all trying
4 to find a solution for it. So I would just ask --
5 you've presented some great issues. Maybe we can have
6 the Chair get a copy of any kind of recommendations that
7 we can consider and present.

8 DIZ LOCARIO: Yeah, I'd be happy to. Yeah,
9 absolutely.

10 MIKE PHIPPS: Mike Phipps. One of our agenda
11 items is addressing certification. And I think this
12 could probably lend a lot of knowledge to that, as among
13 some of the other issues that we have on the agenda
14 items. And we're going to discuss that, the agenda
15 items, when we finish up today.

16 DIZ LOCARIO: Okay, great.

17 MIKE PHIPPS: But, Diz, I have a couple of
18 questions.

19 DIZ LOCARIO: Oh, sure, please.

20 MIKE PHIPPS: This rule of two being ignored,
21 is there -- other than education -- a way to enforce?
22 Because we see it all the time. It's just --

23 DIZ LOCARIO: You know, it'd be great. So,
24 like I said, small businesses don't necessarily want to
25 raise their hand and say, hey, you, customer, do what

1 you're supposed to do. It doesn't resonate well. And I
2 get that.

3 It'd be great if there was an ability to where
4 the SBA could raise those issues and where small
5 businesses could bring that to their advocate and that
6 the SBA puts a stop to that.

7 Now, the problem is that the SBA is one agency
8 and DOD is another and, you know, DHS and all these
9 other agencies. And so you're talking about, you know,
10 this idea of SBA having jurisdiction over other
11 agencies. And that does create some legal issues,
12 creates a lot of political issues. And so I recognize
13 to my point about pie in the sky, but I think that's the
14 type of thing, even if it doesn't fix that particular
15 procurement, hey, DOD, next time you need to do this,
16 you need to do this correctly.

17 And if it means that top-level brass at SBA
18 needs to talk to top-level brass at other agencies, then
19 maybe that's how it happens. Because it's not
20 comfortable and it's not realistic for small businesses
21 and veteran-owned small -- and especially veteran-owned.
22 I mean, veteran owns are -- I've worked with a lot of
23 them. They're not the ones to be the squeaky wheel.
24 They'll get the job done, but they're not going to
25 create a lot of issues with their customer. Most of

1 them are very, very happy with their customer, very,
2 very devoted to their customer, and they're not going to
3 be the ones that are going to be poking them with the
4 stick.

5 But if there was a way that they could do that
6 without, you know, American Legion -- I mean, there's
7 organizations that might be able to do that. Maybe
8 there's some way we can work that into it. But there's
9 got to be a way where the actual business that's
10 affected is insulated from, you know, repercussions, I
11 think.

12 MR. PHIPPS: Excellent. Do we have any other
13 questions for Diz?

14 (No response.)

15 MR. PHIPPS: Diz, thank you very much. Very
16 informative.

17 MR. LOCARIO: My pleasure, my pleasure. Thank
18 you, everyone.

19 MR. PHIPPS: So you're open to coming back to
20 the committee, Diz, and answering some questions?

21 MR. LOCARIO: Absolutely.

22 MR. PHIPPS: Thank you very much. Okay. So
23 that -- that's the wrap-up. Do we have -- so we're
24 going to go into some committee member --
25 committee-specific topics at this point. Unless there's

1 any other comments for the record, does anybody have any
2 other comments for the record before we get into the
3 committee agenda?

4 MR. MCADAMS: Rich McAdams. I had asked
5 earlier this morning one of our speakers if there had
6 been any discussion about raising the 3 percent. And I
7 had asked Barb also about raising the 3 percent
8 set-aside. During the interim period, I looked up -- in
9 1990, there were about 2.3 million service-disabled
10 veterans. There are about 4.2 million today.

11 So that's almost doubling. So I think this
12 committee might be a vehicle -- understanding that will
13 be a multiyear undertaking, Congress has got to do it,
14 but I think that's something we should -- we should
15 think about and put on the table.

16 MR. PHIPPS: Mike Phipps. There's actually --
17 somebody actually did a study about opening up the
18 set-asides to veteran-owned businesses as well and
19 increasing the set-asides. And I'll share that article
20 with the committee and maybe we can post it.

21 All right. That concludes our session. We're
22 off the record.

23 (Whereupon, the conference was concluded at
24 3:03 p.m.)

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